



AN ARTIST  
IN  
ITALY

WALTER TYNDALE R.I.





A. C. & Newbold

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AN ANTIQUITY SHOP, VENICE



# AN ARTIST IN ITALY

WRITTEN AND PAINTED

BY

WALTER TYNDALE, R.I.

'Open my heart, and you will see  
Graved inside of it; "Italy." '



HODDER AND STOUGHTON





## PREFACE

THIS volume is little more than a painter's record of the places he visited while in search of material for his professional work; the pictorial capabilities of those places and the art treasures they contain do in consequence fill the greater part of the following pages. But wherever an artist may set up his easel in Italy, an appeal is made to whatever sense of history he may possess. In this case I have had to rely on others who have devoted their time to original research and have given us the benefit of their knowledge. For many references to Venetian history I am indebted to the works of Mr. Horatio Brown, and also to the author himself for many things he has kindly told me whilst enjoying his hospitality.

The writings of John Addington Symonds have supplied me with a few incidents, as also has Mrs. Oliphant's *Makers of Venice*. I have not consciously taken my facts from Molmenti's *La Storia de Venezia nella vita privata*, and yet I feel more grateful to that consum-

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mate work than to any other for giving me an insight into the character of the Venetian people. I have spent so much of my time in painting the stones of Venice, and have read and reread Ruskin's great work on that subject, that I may be forgiven the many quotations I have culled from his writings. Mr. Edward Hutton's lately published *Venetia* has been helpful to me, and I am partly indebted to Mr. Neville Maugham for the account of the fall of the Campanile.

Italy being too vast a subject to illustrate or write about in one volume, I have confined myself chiefly to Venice and to the hill towns of Tuscany. Mr. Edmund G. Gardner is my chief authority for the historical associations of every noted building in Siena. *The Story of Siena*, forming one of Messrs. Dent's 'Mediaeval Towns' Series, was my constant companion, and I am also much indebted to its author for that portion dealing with the 'Story of San Gimignano.' Miss Jean Carlyle Graham and Miss Elizabeth M. Derbishire have conjointly edited a book on San Gimignano; the text deals lucidly with the town's art treasures and archæology, while the illustrations give a spirited rendering of its buildings. To this book I owe much of the information I obtained on those subjects.

The pleasures of travel to these hill towns are



## PREFACE

greatly enhanced by Mr. Maurice Hewlett's *The Road in Tuscany*. His delightful descriptions, together with Mr. Joseph Pennell's artistic illustrations, make me regret that time did not allow me to follow them everywhere.

I sincerely thank my patrons who have lent me some of the original drawings, and I also thank Mr. J. A. Milne for the pains he has taken in their reproduction.

HASLEMERE, 1913.





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PART I  
VENETIA









## CHAPTER I

### A FIRST VISIT TO ITALY

‘Have we but one life to live, then let us live it in Italy’

ITALY in the early eighties seemed to me a long way off, as doubtless to many other young painters who had to live by their art in London. What little imagination a long course of studio work had left me, had been stirred by a borrowed copy of Ruskin’s *Stones of Venice*; and this, with Turner’s series of Venetian drawings in the cellars of our National Gallery (with due allowance made for that master’s poetic vision), placed Venice somewhere in the regions of the blest.

Yes, it seemed a long way off when each mile was reckoned at a penny, and pence were nearly as scarce as patrons in want of a beginner’s work. Nevertheless, I got there, and it came about in this wise. One of our little crowd which had studios in the vicinity of Fitzroy Street had wintered in the Italian Riviera on account of his health, a compensating Providence having supplied him with the means to pursue his art wherever it suited him best. From time to time a letter would reach us with glowing accounts of places visited, of the deep blue sea and sunny skies; all of which tended to make Fitzroy Street more and more depressing.



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A longer pause than usual in the correspondence induced me to call on his mother to ascertain the cause of his silence. The face of the old family servant who let me in clearly showed that something was amiss. 'I'm glad you've come, sir, for the mistress is very anxious, and was going to write and ask you to call; she's had bad news from Mr. Edward.' The lady seemed genuinely pleased to see me, and she came to the point of her intended letter at once. Her son had been tempted to leave the Riviera for Venice too early in the season, and she had that day received a letter from a doctor in Verona telling her that 'Signore Edoardo' had been seriously ill, but that he hoped in a few days his patient would be able to return to England, taking the journey in easy stages. Now she did not wish her son to do this without a companion, and I was the companion she had thought of. 'Are you very busy just now?' she asked. When I told her that I had just sent in my picture to try my luck at the Royal Academy, and that the dealers were not actually fighting to get my work, she saw no obstacles to my going which could not be removed by means of her cheque-book.

The stages of the homeward journey had been mentioned in the letter—namely, Milan, Turin, Aix-les-Bains and Paris. It was therefore decided that I should break my journey at Aix-les-Bains and ask at the two or three hotels there if my friend had arrived; that he could have reached Paris seemed out of the question. If he were not at Aix I was to send a wire to Verona (the only address we knew), and if I got no answer I should proceed to Turin and ask at the police station to

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see a list of the visitors, or else inquire at the principal hotels. Should I fail to find him there, I would make similar inquiries at Milan.

I had only just time to get back to my rooms, pack up a few necessities, get my cheque cashed and catch the evening Dover express.

The journey to Paris was familiar to me, as I had only lately ceased to be a student in one of the studios there. Beyond Paris all was new, and presumably every youth at two-and-twenty feels a strange excitement in traversing a hitherto unknown country. I looked forward to seeing my friend again, but sincerely hoped I should not find him at any of the intermediate stages between Paris and Verona. I consoled myself that he would soon get my telegram, and, of course, wait till my arrival; and though it might be tantalising to be so near Venice and not be able to go there, it would still be a great privilege to have seen Verona.

I had half a day to wait at Aix-les-Bains, and had soon run round to the different hotels to inquire for one whom I hoped not yet to find. There was time here to await an answer to the telegram I sent to Verona; and, getting none, I presumed that my friend was resting either at Turin or at Milan. On taking my ticket for Turin I was told at the station that, owing to some stoppage in the Mont Cenis tunnel, we should not reach our destination at the scheduled time. I learnt from my fellow-passengers that a portion of the tunnel had fallen in, and that we could proceed as far as the breach, and would then be taken on by another train beyond it.

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Until that day I had never seen a hill higher than *les buttes Montmartre*, and a glorious sunset in the semi-Alpine country beyond Aix-les-Bains excited me more than the breakdown which the other passengers were discussing.

Of Modane I have little recollection, except of a station that appeared very cold after the hot and stuffy carriage, of Italian custom-house officials with white gloves, and of one of them pasting a stamp on my Gladstone bag ; it also appeared strange to see snow everywhere lightening the darkness beyond the station, for the morning at Aix had been as hot as a midsummer day in England. The next thing I can recollect is being awakened in the tunnel, our leaving the train, and being conducted through a subterranean passage till we reached the outside of the mountain.

Nothing could have been prearranged to have given us a more imposing reception on Italian soil. A panorama of snowy mountains lay spread out before us, every peak and crag, awaking from the misty blue shades, reflected the roseate light from the eastern sky. In countless numbers they filed away from us, till they were merged in the mighty chain which girded the whole horizon.

We were not given much time to enjoy this enchanting view, but were conducted along an extemporised path on the shoulder of the mountain, till we reached a second underground passage, which led to the main tunnel beyond the breach. It seemed like entering the infernal regions after a foretaste of the delectable mountains. Happily, it was not for long ;



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and while we descended into the plains of Piedmont, we were gradually let down from the sublime to the commonplace of low-lying country seen in the glare of a midday sun.

The few hours spent in Turin were chiefly occupied in trying to find this friend whom I hoped not yet to meet. A stately city is Turin, with all the airs of a once reigning beauty now in her dowagerhood. The five years during which she had been the capital of Italy seemed to have left their mark ; but the life and movement of a capital city have since gone to Florence, who in her turn had to succumb to the greater claims of Rome. Its plan is much the same as that of an American city, though it has not its look of having been recently run up. It is in reality an extension of the plan of a Roman colony, dating back to the time of Augustus. I have often spent an hour or two there since that first visit, and always with a certain pleasure ; but I have never been tempted to make a longer stay, as I could hardly imagine myself sitting down to paint its faultless regularity.

I went on to Milan that same afternoon, this time really hoping to find my friend, for, having heard nothing from Verona, I feared that were he not in Milan, I should probably fail to meet him at all. It was too late to make inquiries that night, and after two nights spent in a train, a bed seemed clearly indicated. I went to an Italian inn recommended by a fellow-passenger ; for should I fail by any chance to meet my friend, ways and means would have to be carefully studied. I was able to make my wants known to the landlord, who spoke a little French, and I had some supper in the *trat-*

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*toria*. I still have vague recollections of men shovelling macaroni into their mouths, of others lighting very long and emaciated cigars over little spirit lamps, and emphasising their conversation with very marked hand gestures. Something seemed amiss with the waiter when I got up to leave. I told him the number of my room, but that did not satisfy him, and it was some time before I realised that meals were to be paid for immediately after consumption: a *trattoria*, though a part of the hotel building, is run as a separate concern.

How very much more one realises that one is in a foreign country, if one avoids the cosmopolitan hotels which subsist on the tourists. Some accustomed comforts are at first missed; but there is much to compensate for these in the increased pleasures of travel which one gets from a change of diet, other sounds of language and the countless little details which differ from those we find at home. I have since then generally avoided hotels with English-speaking hall porters who meet the trains, and have fared much more enjoyably and also more economically by going to some *albergo* where the better-class Italians go themselves.

I inquired early the next morning at the central police office for a list of the hotel visitors, but nowhere could I find my friend's name. I was told that the names of the latest arrivals were not yet got in, and that I had better inquire at the hotels myself. These are so numerous that I spent most of that day in running from one to another, but no 'Signore Edoardo' was to be found. No answer from Verona to a second wire made

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me feel very uneasy, so I decided to go there and see for myself. There was no time to do the sights, but as I have been to Milan several times since we may refer again to it later on.

An incident at the station left a bad impression on me, and also left me some francs the poorer. When I took my ticket I offered the clerk a sovereign, telling him I would take twenty-five *lire* for it, which at that time would have been one or two to his good. He told me that they were not allowed to accept foreign money, but that I could get it changed at the newspaper stall, which, curiously enough, was kept by a Frenchwoman. She said she would change it, and proceeded to give me twenty *lire*, and on being told that the sovereign was worth twenty-six she calmly retorted that she knew its value well enough; but that was all she would give, and if I wanted better change I could go into the town and get it. Now, as I had but a few minutes to catch the only train which could get me to Verona that night, there was no help for it but to submit to this fraud. The booking clerk had his eye at the window all the while, and I have no doubt shared in the proceeds of the swindle after my departure.

The range of mountains, which close in the plains of Lombardy, caught the light of the declining sun and turned to an ashy grey before Brescia was reached; after which their outlines were only visible where they masked the starry heavens.

My heart beat quickly as I was rattled along in the omnibus from Verona station to the Albergo delle due Torri, since known as the Grand Hotel de Londra.



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Should I, I wondered, find that my friend had left, or was he possibly too ill to attend to my telegrams? Perhaps worse news might await me.

My first question on my arrival was answered, that 'Signore Edoardo G.' had left three days before, and, being so much better, had decided to go straight through to Paris without a stop. 'Here are two telegrams for him, but I don't know where to forward them,' said the hall porter, showing me the couple I had sent. At any rate my friend was better, and though I was bitterly disappointed at not seeing him, consolations, which come quickly at two-and-twenty, soon put me in spirits again.

On considering, while I supped, the state of my exchequer, I found I had more than enough to get me back to England. But was there enough to enable me to go on to Venice and spend a few days there? It was certain that I must get out of this grand hotel the very next day, and if it was to be Venice a modest Italian *albergo* must be found there. I wisely decided to lay my case before the landlord, who seemed a good-natured man. He told me what it would cost to get to Venice, and he also gave me the name of an inn where I should be comfortably boarded for seven francs a day. The state of the exchequer would at this rate allow of five days in Venice, to say nothing of a long morning in Verona.

I have painted many market-places since that memorable morning, and in the whole of Italy I have never seen the Piazza delle Erbe equalled. I was there soon after the first *contadini* had fixed up their stalls, and those huge red umbrellas which tend, more than any-



## A FIRST VISIT TO ITALY

thing else, to make this market gratefully remembered by any painter who has seen it. Nothing but sun and weather could have made the crude cochineal dye of these umbrellas take every shade of red that ever left a Titian's palette. The country produce, piled up beneath them, seemed more beautiful than ever under such glorious sheltering. The costumes of the people were less interesting than I had anticipated ; but this must have been an afterthought, for of the hour or two I wandered about that market-place, I can recall nothing which did not fill me with sheer delight. One moment, though ; one detail did, I remember, make an unpleasant impression. A beautiful strip of iridescent blue caught my eye, and on further examination I found it was a string of dead kingfishers. Now, can it be worth while to destroy these gem-like little birds for the sake of so small a particle of food ?

I returned to Verona years after this, my first visit, on purpose to paint the market ; but unfortunately my picture is not available for the purposes of this book, and the only market with which I can illustrate this chapter is one I painted recently in a hill town in Southern Tuscany. The scene is in a much more modest setting than the Piazza delle Erbe, though having quite sufficient pictorial capabilities. Matters were very much simplified in this case, for there was only one spot from which I could see the makings of a picture ; whereas in the great square at Verona I could hardly sit down to one subject without something taking place which would suggest a better. Many a picture painted here is spoilt by too many objects of interest being crammed

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on to one canvas, like a cake into which a cook has put too many plums.

Were the kaleidoscopic arrangements of colour which are given by the flowers, fruits, and vegetables absent, as well as the shawls of the women and the red umbrellas, there would still remain many things to tempt an artist to set up his easel. The fountain surmounted by a statue of 'Verona,' and the canopied tribuna borne on four graceful pillars, are both fitting decorations to a square enclosed by palaces with frescoed façades, and dominated by the mediæval tower of the town-hall. A marble column surmounted by the lion of St. Mark rises, amidst the stalls, at the northern end of the square. Venice being now my objective, it was a pleasant reminder that I was already well within the territory of the erstwhile Venetian Republic.

While looking at this column I was addressed in German by an elderly man, who offered his services as a guide. As I could then speak that language, but scarcely a word of Italian, I decided to take him and see as much as possible in the remaining couple of hours I still had in Verona. I did wisely, for in spite of the chattering of a *valet de place* being often undesirable, I should have much regretted missing many objects of supreme interest which I might not have found by my unguided self.

We mounted the tower of the Municipio to get a general view of the lie of the city. It lies for the most part in the lower half of the S-shaped turnings of the Adige, and from our high point of vantage my guide pointed out landmarks in its history from the time it was a flourishing Roman colony right up to the wars,

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in which he himself had fought, to free Venetia and Lombardy from the yoke of Austria. The Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, to which I was afterwards conducted, has now two monuments, which bring the extreme limits of Verona's known history to our notice. The equestrian statue of United Italy's first king had not then been erected ; but he prances there now as if wishing to get off his pedestal, as he, or I should say his horse, does in every town of any importance in Italy. With every respect for him to whom Italians owe their present independence, it is not this statue which brings the visitor to the Piazza which is called after it, but the Roman Amphitheatre, which is perhaps, outside of the Eternal City, the greatest existing monument of the Empire. It was built by Diocletian and restored by Napoleon, whose visit is recorded on a tablet. Impressive as is this great arena, other structures which still pulsate with the life of the city attracted me more.

We hurried off to San Zeno, where, instead of being reminded of Napoleon, we heard much of 'il Giovanni Ruskino' from the sacristan. Ruskin had spent many days there a year or two previously, and I was pointed out details he had carefully drawn and measured up. I have often since spoken of Ruskin to the custodians of churches both in Italy and France, and have always been pleased to hear them in their turn speak very affectionately of our great art critic. Little wonder that he spent much time at San Zeno, for one can count on one's fingers the churches in Italy which can compare with it for beauty and for interest.

Herr Baedeker will supply the visitor with the chief



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objects of interest at San Zeno, with their authors, dates and measurements ; and those who wish for a more detailed description I would refer to the chapters dealing with Verona in *Venice and Venetia*, by Edward Hutton—a handy book and full of information, which Messrs. Methuen have lately published.

I hurried back to the centre of the town to see the tombs of the Scaligers, of which Ruskin's description had not slipped my memory. As Messrs. Dent & Co. have now placed the *Stones of Venice* within the reach of every one, it would be presumptuous to attempt to describe them. One of the least imposing as to size and architectural embellishment is that of Can Grande ; but any one giving a careful study to these tombs will quite appreciate why Ruskin ranks it above the others. In comparing the sarcophagi in SS. Giovanni e Paolo at Venice with these tombs, he writes : ' These figures are always in Venice most rudely chiselled ; the progress of figure-sculpture being there comparatively tardy. At Verona, where the great Pisan school had strong influence, the monumental sculpture is immeasurably finer ; and, so early as about the year 1335, the consummate form of the Gothic tomb occurs in the monument of Can Grande della Scala at Verona. It is set over the portal of the chapel anciently belonging to the family. The sarcophagus is sculptured with shallow bas-reliefs, representing (which is rare in the tombs with which I am acquainted in Italy, unless they are those of saints) the principal achievements of the warrior's life, especially the siege of Vicenza and the battle of Piacenza ; these sculptures, however, form little more than a chased and



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roughened groundwork for the fully relieved statues representing the Annunciation, projecting boldly from the front of the sarcophagus. Above, the Lord of Verona is laid in his long robe of civil dignity, wearing the simple bonnet, consisting merely of a fillet bound round the brow, knotted and falling on the shoulder. He is laid as asleep; his arms crossed upon his body, and his sword by his side. Above him, a bold arched canopy is sustained by two projecting shafts, and on the pinnacle of its roof is the statue of the knight on his war-horse; his helmet dragon-winged and crested with the dog's head, tossed back behind his shoulders, and the broad and blazoned drapery floating back from his horse's breast,—so truly drawn by the old workman from the life, that it seems to wave in the wind, and the knight's spear to shake, and his marble horse to be evermore quickening its pace, and starting into heavier and hastier charge, as the silver clouds float past behind it in the sky.'

For further description of this tomb, as well as of the others, see Vol. III. cap. ii. secs. liv. to lvi.

A few steps from this sleeping-place of the dead takes us into the Piazza dei Signori; and, hardly awakened from the fourteenth century to which the Scaligers had transported us, we find ourselves in mid-Renaissance, gazing at Sammicheli's portal of the Prefettura. The change of sensations is so sudden that it is difficult to say if it is a pleasurable one. On turning the angle of the building we face Fra Gioconda's masterpiece, the Palazzo del Consiglio, usually called La Loggia. It is such a beautiful specimen of early Italian

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Renaissance that we are soon consoled for the great change in architecture which, at the end of the fifteenth century, affected the whole north of Italy. Pure Gothic is little seen in Central and Southern Italy, and when it occurs one is not surprised to hear the name of *Il Tedesco* given to its possible architect. Lombardic Gothic, often very fine, is met with south of the confines of Lombardy; but it is not the pure Gothic as we understand that term in France and England. From the Romanesque—a true native of Italy—to the Early Renaissance, there is not so great a breaking away from the earlier traditions as we experience here in the few yards separating the Scaliger tombs from *Fra Gioconda's* great work.

The entrances to the *Piazza dei Signori* are spanned by archways, which give it a sense of seclusion, absent from the picturesque *Piazza delle Erbe* close by. What a delight to spend an hour in either of these two squares! The latter full of life and colour, the former entirely enclosed by noble structures, every one reminiscent of the great men who left their mark on Verona's history. A statue of Dante has been placed in its centre—a well-chosen spot to commemorate Italy's greatest poet. Would that the statue were worthy of him whom it represents or of the square in which it stands!

Space only allowing me to write of such places as I have been able to illustrate, I must ask my reader to accompany me to Venice.

## CHAPTER II

### VENICE

‘Venetia, Venetia, chi non ti vede  
Non ti pretia.’—*Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

I ‘DID’ Verona during that first visit as many a globe-trotter has done it since—trying to absorb in a few hours that which in a month could not be studied adequately. My head in a whirl, with so much of interest crowded into it during one long morning, I took a seat in the *accelerato*, due to reach Venice before the day was spent.

The fertile plain through which the line runs is sufficiently interesting for the traveller not to regret a book, but not too exciting to disturb comparative rest. The hills to the north are near enough to distinguish the little towns which crest some of their summits, and beyond we catch sight ever and anon of a snowy peak of the Tyrolese Alps. To the south the plain stretches away, till it is lost in the mists which hang about the horizon. After about an hour’s run we drew up at a station, and I heard the historic name of Vicenza called out by a porter with as little reverence as an English one might call out Woking. The man did not seem the least conscious of any of the reflected glory of his city, though he may have dwelt in a tenement in one of Palladio’s great palaces. An hour later I heard Padova









## VENICE

As we neared the city end of the bridge, many buildings which looked well from across the lagoon became the commonplace erections usually forming the approach to a station. Visitors need not take that too much to heart, for the moment they turn their backs on the terminus, they are transported into a world made familiar by many pictorial presentments, but, till actually seen, believed to exist only in the vague regions of an artist's fancy. Who will ever forget his impressions while he descends from the station to the edge of the green waters? I seem yet to hear the plashing of the wavelets against the marble steps, when I first took my seat in a gondola. I think I could recognise again the old man who pushed us off with his boat-hook, and bowed his acknowledgment of the copper I threw into his hat.

An iron bridge, which here spans the Grand Canal, just tempered an enthusiasm which might have been overwhelming. The gondola, however, soon left the accursed thing behind us, and I was prepared to enjoy to the uttermost the grandeur of this waterway. Many other passengers were being similarly conveyed to their destinations, and the silence of the traffic was impressive. The vista of palaces rising from the water seemed familiar, but familiar as a dream recalled in wakeful hours.

With a low cry, my gondolier turned his craft sharp to the right, and we entered a narrow canal, darkened by the projecting eaves of the tall houses. Here the strangeness of this strange city seemed even more impressive than in the Grand Canal. Could these prison-like tenements be the abode of living people? Some linen, darkly outlined against the strip of sky, must have been

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hung out to dry by living hands; but, forgotten or uncared for, it received again the moisture which rose from the canal. One of the houses had a palatial frontage, with damp-stains reaching well above the rusty window-bars; green weeds hung from the steps leading down to the water from a handsomely designed portal. A keystone, fashioned into a grotesque human head, leered at us from above the rotting door. We seemed to be moving through a city overtaken by the floods, and deserted by its inhabitants, till I was somewhat reassured by the sight of an old woman who crossed a bridge we passed under.

The vista would open up anon, where the houses were set back on a quay, and groups of people and shop fronts replace the ghostly look of the canal we had left. We passed under many more bridges, and through another of these terrifying canals, and again the gondolier repeated his warning, and we were once more in the Grand Canal. I seemed to breathe more freely; but it was only for a short while, for we crossed over, and entered one so narrow that there seemed barely room for two boats to pass; yet some imposing-looking houses fronted on this drain, their wide cornices nearly meeting overhead. After a few turnings we stopped at a house with some architectural pretensions, but with all the outward appearance of having been given up to the ghosts of sixteenth-century tenants. Thinking that my man was only taking a rest, I was surprised when he hailed some one from within, and then, looking up at the portal, I saw the name of the hotel to which I had been recommended.



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Had some spectral being, in a dress of a bygone age, received me, I should have felt little surprise. Instead of this, a chubby-faced and fussy little porter came down the steps, and gave me a hand to help me out of the gondola, with a warning not to put my foot on the lowest step, which was covered with a blackish-green slime. I was led through a dark vestibule, which might have been an empty wine vault, and then taken up a flight of stairs into a well-lighted hall, with rooms leading out of it, which had a comfortable and cheery appearance. The landlord could speak German, and, being familiar with that language myself, I soon felt at home. He told me that the hotel was only five minutes' walk from St. Mark's Square, and, as there was still some daylight left, I started off at once.

I was delighted to find that it was possible to get about without a gondola, in spite of the romance of that means of locomotion. But what a network of narrow lanes and blind alleys to lead a stranger astray! Hotel keepers' 'five minutes' from central places must not be taken too literally, though had I not been obliged to retrace my steps owing to their being stopped by a canal, possibly a ten minutes' run might have brought me to my destination.

Now such fears as I had of Venice not coming up to my expectations increased as I neared St. Mark's Square, and when a colonnade was pointed out to me as the entrance to the Piazza, I hesitated a moment before turning the corner. I was certainly not disappointed with anything I had so far seen, so why should I fear that St. Mark's had been overrated? Too

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little daylight was remaining to allow of any being wasted, so I crept round the corner, and entered the colonnade.

The church, as seen from across the vast Piazza, and overshadowed by the great campanile, appeared smaller than I expected. But its colour so surpassed my wildest imaginings that there was no room for disappointment. Beautiful at all times, its supreme moment is when every dome and minaret are suffused in the warm light of the after-glow. I watched the cool shades creep up its frontage and dim the burnished gold of its ornamentation, till the whole mass stood out dark against the starlit sky.

A steely light shone on the Piazza on the following morning; and, with a cold blue sky overhead, the front of St. Mark's looked colourless compared to its gem-like beauty of the previous evening. It was a time to study its detail rather than its effect as a whole. It is not until half the Piazza has been traversed that the front of the church is seen as its designers intended it. Imposing as is the appearance of the great square, I had far rather it had retained the dimensions it had when Gentile Bellini made it the setting of his famous picture, the 'Miracle of the Holy Cross.' Its present size unscales the church after which it is called, as also does the campanile since the south side of the square was set back, exposing the entire western face of the tower. These are not, however, reflections which crossed my mind during those far-off days; the delight of finding myself so unexpectedly in this city of my dreams left no room for exercising any critical faculties. I seemed to

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tread on air, and every few yards, as I approached the church's façade, revealed some fresh beauty of form or colour.

Every one has heard of the doves of St. Mark's ; but they, like Venice itself, must be seen to be appreciated. A veritable cloud of them descended from every cornice, and sculptured ornament affording a foothold, and a shelter from the morning sun ; they darkened the pavement around some children in charge of a prettily costumed nursemaid. A little girl, with a bag of corn in one hand, shielded with the other her face to protect it from the birds' importunities. I had to lessen my pace for fear of stepping on them ; and though, as I have since learnt, they are well able to take care of themselves, they move so leisurely away from a stranger's footsteps as to impress him with their sense of a prior right to the pavement.

When I had crossed half the square, I saw St. Mark's front from the distance allowed by the original enclosure. The campanile comes but waist-high into visual focus, and does not unscale the church's proportions, as it does when seen from the western end of the present Piazza. At this distance the varied colours of the materials used, its mosaics and the gilding of the finials, all tell, in spite of the sunlight being yet hid from its western face.

Some children with bags of corn cluster round the steps of one of Leopardi's pedestals of the three great flag-staffs. A fresh stir in the pigeon world follows, and hundreds of their forms cross and recross the face of St. Mark's, and dapple the pavement with moving shadows.



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Four centuries separate these pedestals from the time when the great basilica was raised ; Gothic work had superseded the Byzantine, though still retaining some of its influence, and it was not till the full efflorescence of the Renaissance, that Alessandro Leopardi was commissioned to replace the old wooden stands by his bronze masterpieces. There is so much in and about the church to tell of the intervening periods that the incongruity of the styles does not offend. On the contrary, the great shrine is thereby more closely associated with those centuries during which Venice was at the greatness of her power. I was too inexperienced then to study its construction critically, and possibly I enjoyed its beauty more in consequence, than when I returned to Venice after a lapse of years, and with some further knowledge of architecture. I had left home in too great a hurry to collect my sketching materials—an omission for which I am very thankful—for a spoiled sketch might have marred my full enjoyment of the beautiful things which surrounded me. Would that my friend whom I had failed to find could have been with me to share my delight !

The shadow of the campanile stole nearer the great façade, and I, unconsciously following in it, found myself within a few yards of the central porch, when a bell striking the hour made me turn to the left. The sound came from the summit of a beautiful clock-tower, which would have caught my eye instantly had I not been so much absorbed in the colour and detail of St. Mark's frontage. Two bronze figures swayed backwards and forwards and struck ten times a great bell hung on an



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iron trestle and outlined against the sky. A blue and gold dial tells the time of day, also the day of the month and much other useful information. A crowd of people pass and repass under the arch supporting the tower, and leading into a narrow street which, one is surprised to learn, is the chief thoroughfare of Venice for those who go on foot. But why delay to step inside the church? I confess to have felt as diffident to enter it as I now feel at attempting any description of what I saw.

Passing through the central doorway we step down into a spacious atrium, which extends the whole length of the frontage, and on the north side till it reaches the transept. Men walking about with their hats on make us realise that we are not yet in the church itself, though few sacred edifices can boast of more lavish decoration. Thirteenth-century mosaics illustrate the story of the Old Testament, which was meant for the edification of the unbaptised and of those who were temporarily outside the pale of the Church, and might not enter the sacred building. These restrictions being now removed, let us pass through the door of the church proper.

No words of mine can convey the impression made on the mind of any one who, appreciative of colour, first enters St. Mark's. I have attempted after many visits to Venice to do with my brush what is far beyond anything I dare attempt with my pen, and this must now serve as an illustration to this chapter. It is always interesting to know how a work of supreme beauty affects the mind of others; but as few have Ruskin's command of language I will here repeat his description of how the interior of St. Mark's impressed him. He enters it from

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the Baptistery, in which are entombed the remains of Venice's great Doge, Andrea Dandolo : 'Through the heavy door whose bronze network closes the place of his rest, let us enter the church itself. It is lost in a still deeper twilight, to which the eye must get accustomed for some moments before the form of the building can be traced ; and then there opens before us a vast cave, hewn out in the form of a Cross, and divided into shadowy aisles by many pillars. Round the domes of the roof the light enters only through narrow apertures like large stars ; and here and there a ray or two from some far-away casement wanders into the darkness, and casts a narrow phosphoric stream upon the waves of marble that heave and fall in a thousand colours along the floor. What else there is of light is from torches, or silver lamps, burning ceaselessly in the recesses of the chapels ; the roof sheeted with gold, and the polished walls covered with alabaster, give back at every curve and angle some feeble gleaming to the flames ; and the glories round the heads of the sculptured saints flash out upon us as we pass them, and sink again into the gloom. Underfoot and overhead, a continual succession of crowded imagery, one picture passing into another, as in a dream ; forms beautiful and terrible mixed together ; dragons and serpents, and ravening beasts of prey, and graceful birds in the midst of them drink from running fountains and feed from vases of crystal ; the passions and the pleasures of human life symbolised together, and the mystery of its redemption ; for the mazes of interwoven lines and changeful pictures lead away at last to the Cross, lifted and carved in every place

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and upon every stone ; sometimes with the serpent of eternity wrapt round it, sometimes with doves beneath its arms, and sweet herbage growing forth from its feet ; but conspicuous most of all on the great rood that crosses the church before the altar, raised in bright blazonry against the shadow of the apse. And although in the recesses of the aisles and chapels, when the mist of the incense hangs heavily, we may see continually a figure traced in faint lines upon their marble, a woman standing with her eyes raised to heaven, and the inscription above her, “ Mother of God,” she is not here the presiding deity. It is the Cross that is first seen, and always, burning in the centre of the temple ; and every dome and hollow of its roof has the figure of Christ in the utmost height of it, raised in power, or returning in judgment.’

As the works of Ruskin have now been placed within the means of all, it would be well for every one to read carefully the fourth chapter of the second volume of the *Stones of Venice*. There is much in St. Mark’s Church which meets with criticism from architects of repute, and there is certainly much, especially in the exterior, which, from a purist point of view, is structurally far from perfection. But beautiful colour, like charity, covers a multitude of sins ; and though artists may disagree on many subjects, they will, I think, all agree that St. Mark’s is the most beautiful religious structure in the whole world.

With a mind too exhausted to combine in one day a visit to the Ducal Palace with that to St. Mark’s, I climbed up the campanile—at all times an easy ascent



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up the inclined planes which served in lieu of steps in the old tower. This is worth any one's while, be the visit to Venice ever so short, for from no point can a better idea be gained of how the city is sheltered from the open sea by the *lidi* which enclose the lagoons. It is singular that, with the exception of the Salute entrance to the Grand Canal, not one of the hundred and fifty waterways which intersect Venice can be seen from here. One mass of houses seems to cover the whole extent of the city, in spite of its being composed of a series of islands connected by an innumerable number of bridges. From the bird's-eye view we get of St. Mark's and of the Ducal Palace, we realise how intimately these structures are connected; and although the latter is a Gothic building and the former Byzantine, the two originally rose together—St. Mark's having been the chapel of the Doges until the time of Napoleon, when it was made the cathedral of Venice. A chain of Alps girds the whole horizon as we look across the lagoon separating us from the mainland, and, beyond the mists which enshroud Padua, the Euganean Hills tell purple against the evening sky.

During the few days I was able to remain in Venice, I visited such places as had particularly interested me in my various readings of Ruskin; but I never realised till after my return home how much there was that I should have made a point of seeing. Five days are soon passed, but seemed an epoch in my existence; and they may have started the travel craze which has since driven me to many parts of the globe.

I looked up a sculptor friend of mine whose studio



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was opposite my own, and he pointed out a cast of the statue of Colleoni which he had just acquired, while he envied my just having seen the original. I am afraid I was mean enough to turn to some other subject, for I had not the courage to confess that I had not seen it. For some years I suffered from attacks of Colleoni. Another sculptor friend was engaged for a long while on an equestrian statue now in a conspicuous site in London, and I never went to see him but that twinges of my complaint returned. The first person whom I, after my return to England, hurried to see was, as may be imagined, 'Signore Edoardo,' and many a laugh we had over the wild-goose chase which gave me the opportunity of seeing Venice.

## CHAPTER III

### THE 'DORSODURO' AND A FEW WORDS CONCERNING THE 'SALUTE'

'Venetia now repeats to you the graceful, plaintive old refrain :  
You go from hence, it is too true, but, *veni etiam*, come again.'—HORATIO F. BROWN.

MANY years elapsed between my first visit to Venice and my second; I, however, made amends to my first love by not leaving her for six months, and by repeating this long visit in the following year. I was much better equipped for my courtship, as I had learnt to speak Italian fairly well in other parts of Italy. The interval was also long enough not to miss relics of the past that I may have noticed during my first visit, and which had been 'improved' away. Changes in any city to which one is attached are unpleasant; but in the case of Venice any change becomes an outrage. Happily, there are now many distinguished Venetians who are fully alive to their great inheritance, and can make their influence felt in guarding their monuments from profane hands.

One of the canals had been filled up, and this I noticed because it prevented my being able to retrace, from St. Mark's Square, the hotel where I first put up, the name of which I had forgotten. Venice has certainly become more noisy since the early eighties; steamers disturb the reflections in the Grand Canal, and

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the hooting or the squeal of a syren echoes in the arches of the Doge's Palace ; while from across the Giudecca Canal a steam whistle calls the black-faced workmen to their labour. But in spite of these things Venice is less changed than any city I know, which has a large and thriving population. You can still walk along its streets without the fear of being knocked down by a motor car, and its small canals are too narrow to allow of steam navigation. Motor boats are, however, becoming a nuisance to those who still prefer the gondola ;—let us hope that the price of petrol may check this growing evil.

I was met by an old friend on my second arrival at the Venice station, and, while waiting in a gondola for my luggage, the lapping of the wavelets against the steps to the water's edge vividly recalled my arrival there some twenty years previously. These reflections were soon disturbed by two American ladies who arrived at the edge of the quay with their luggage. 'Just to think of it, mamma, the only remaining gondola is engaged,' came from a pretty young woman, addressed to the other, a duplicate of herself of some twenty more summers. As there seemed room for us all, I suggested that they had better get into mine, and I could leave them at their hotel on the way to my rooms. This they gladly accepted, and after a huge Saratoga trunk had been placed so as best to trim the boat, we started for our destinations.

The younger lady started the conversation : 'We told the porters to get us a *voiture*, but as they did not seem to understand, and kept pointing to the river, we

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went to look for a conveyance ourselves. Finding nothing, we returned to the station, and from what we could gather, the only way to get to our hotel was to go in one of these gondolas.' I informed her that boats of some kind or another were the only carriages that Venice knew, and that the canals here correspond to streets in other cities. 'Why, who ever heard of a city without streets?' was the rejoinder. I explained that streets existed, but were too narrow to allow of carriages, even if the high-arched bridges made that means of locomotion possible; and I also tried to explain that Venice was built on some mud-flats out in the sea. 'Why on earth build in the sea when there is so much land?' was rather a difficult question to answer while passing so many objects likely to disturb her attention.

It has been often told how the Veneti, after the destruction of Aquileia, fled before the barbarian hordes under Attila, and took refuge on the mud-flats in the lagoons.

'A few in fear,  
Flying from him whose boast it was  
That the grass grew not where his horse had trod,  
Gave birth to Venice. Like the water-fowl,  
They built their nests among the ocean waves;  
And where the sands were shifting, as the wind  
Blew from the north and south—where they that came  
Had to make sure the ground they stood upon,  
Rose, like an exhalation from the deep,  
A vast metropolis, with glistening spires,  
With theatres, basilicas adorned;  
A scene of light and glory, a dominion,  
That has endured the longest among men.'—ROGERS.

I might have fired this off at the ladies, had I not been



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afraid of getting stuck half way. To study a subject so full of interest as is the rise of Venice I should recommend Mr. Horatio Brown's *Venetian Republic*. A stay in Venice is only half appreciated without some knowledge of its history.

Having deposited our two American ladies and the huge Saratoga trunk at one of the chief hotels, our gondola crossed the Grand Canal, and sped down one or two of the lesser ones which lead to the Zattere. No. 222 of the Fondamenta Cabalā was our destination; and while there, in the good company of my friend and that of one or two other artists, I enjoyed to the uttermost a prolonged stay in Venice.

My companion knew every nook and corner of the city, and to those who, like ourselves, prefer their feet even to a gondola, the companionship of one who can find his way through the intricate streets of Venice is a boon indeed, especially if that companion and one-self have tastes in common. I wished to get to work soon, having a special commission from a London firm of dealers to paint a series of Venetian water-colours. What a delight it is to be in a city one loves, and feel that its sights instead of being the business of the day can be taken as a recreation; to feel that if something be missed one day, there yet remain opportunities for a future visit! The incidents found by accident have often an interest above many tabulated in a guide-book. Then Venice is so large that one quarter may occupy the sketcher's time during a month or more, and, when that is exhausted, some other quarter holds out the attractions of exploring a new city, without having

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to undertake a journey or the inconvenience of finding new lodgings. Not being in a hotel, with more or less fixed hours for meals, made this work much easier and also much more entertaining. Should we elect to paint in a quarter at some distance from our *fondamenta*, a *trattoria* would be found, near our subjects, where we could take our midday meal, and, if necessary, leave our traps there till we should want them on the following day.

The *trattorie*, or *ristoranti* as the more pretentious call themselves, are very humble-looking places, except a few in and about St. Mark's Square. But often the poorest-looking place has a reputation for some dish which cannot be equalled in the large hotels, and if the proprietor is flattered by seeing that his specialty is appreciated, he may suggest a bottle of wine which he carefully reserves for the elect. The Italians are good cooks if left to do it their own way, and if the guests will content themselves with native dishes. It is in the cosmopolitan hotels, where the foreigner demands what he has been used to, that a poor and characterless meal is often served. A sporting element adds to the amusement of discovering a *trattoria* where the Venetian epicure goes for a particular *frittata* or a dish of *frutti di mare*. If one draws a blank, and one has to fall back on a poor *bistecca*, it must be taken as one of the moods of fortune, without which sport cannot exist.

Should the sun fail in a subject dependent on its light, the artist does not lose his afternoon, as he often would in many other places; for there is no quarter in

INTERIOR OF ST. MARK'S









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Venice that has not some treasure in one of its churches well worth the finding, or some shrine or tablet on house or bridge that will repay being carefully drawn. Happily these tablets are now all scheduled, and protected from the foreign museum emissary or private collector; for many of them are not merely picturesque incidents on a wall space, but works of art of a high order. The law to check the exportation of Italian works of art came none too soon, and had it not been passed some years ago, the country would have been swept bare of every portable precious object except those in the public galleries. 'We have closed the stable door after the horse has fled,' mournfully said an Italian to me when speaking on this subject. Certainly much had fled before the door was closed; but, thank God, a great deal still remains, and fortunately the bulk of what left the country came from the interiors of the houses and from private gardens, and a shamefacedness of the owners prevented them in many cases from parting with such belongings as can be seen from the outside.

Nearly every *campo* or square still has its marble well-head, in spite of thousands which left Venice; these must, therefore, have all been taken from the internal courts, one of which every house of any size contained. I remember the captain of a liner, which used to call at Venice, telling me that he hardly ever left the port without a number of these well-heads for some antiquity dealer in England; pretty ornaments, no doubt, in an English garden. But how much do they not lose when away from suitable surroundings and the sites in which they served a distinct purpose?

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Let us confine ourselves at present to the immediate neighbourhood where I abode. The 'Fondamenta Cabalā' is on a canal traversing the spit of the Dorsoduro where it separates the large waterway of the Giudecca from the 'Canal Grande.' The Dorsoduro is one of the *Sestiere*, or six parts into which Venice is divided, and is so called from the solidity of the mud-flat on which that part of the city is built ; *i.e.* The Hard Back. The house in which my friends and I lived had for some time been patronised by brothers of the brush, and was usually known to them as Two, Two, Two. A number so easily remembered is an advantage in Venice, where the houses are not numbered according to the streets or canals they face, but according to their place in the whole *Sestiere* ; thus your number may run into several thousands, which you yourself may remember, but which very soon slips the memory of your friends. Singularly enough, the number of the house where I lodged during the following year was 1111, as easy to commit to memory as 222.

About a hundred yards along our canal led to the 'Zattere,' a wide quay more than a mile long and called after the rafts or floats of timber which used to be made fast here. It is a grand place from which to study boats and shipping. Coasting vessels laden with fagots of wood from the Dalmatian coast, and Chioggia fishing-smacks with their red sails painted with strange devices, lie alongside of barges unloading salt, and here and there a fresh touch of colour is given by a fruit and vegetable seller who steers his boat amongst the craft lying fast, and tempts their crews with queer-shaped gourds or



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whatever he may have picked up cheap at the Rialto market. Looking east the tower of San Giorgio is visible between the masts and rigging ; and, across the wide canal, the façade of the Redentore gives a dignity to the frontage of the Giudecca. Massive clusters of beams, shaped like gigantic asparagus bunches, mark at intervals the deep channels in the waterway, and beyond their alignment lie the big black steamers loading or unloading their freights on the quays of the opposite island.

Following the Zattere towards the extreme point of the spit of land on which we are, we cross a high-backed bridge, and reach the quay of the Dogana. From the top of this bridge we catch a peep of the back of the 'Salute' across the gardens of the Patriarchal Seminary. On the quay itself we get a view of the Dogana, the custom-house erected in 1676, which Ruskin quotes as an example of the work done while Venice was in her full decline : 'The statue of Fortune, forming the weathercock, standing on the world, is alike characteristic of the conceits of the time and of the hopes and principles of the last days of Venice.'

Alas, buildings are in this respect like people, and may be morally wrong yet outwardly beautiful. Though not usually in sympathy with Italian seventeenth-century work, I confess to admiring the beauty of the whole mass of building formed by the Salute, the Patriarchal Seminary, and the Dogana, all of which belong to that century. Their situation is of course an exceptionally fine one ; and shows how ably Longhena made the most of it while using the architectural style of his period.

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It is related of Canaletto that he often set his pupils to paint this view of the Dogana. It would be interesting to see how Guardi might have treated it, should he have been amongst them.

Let us proceed to the end of this quay, to the 'Punta della Salute,' on which point the Dogana stands. Here the three great waterways of Venice meet. The 'Canale di San Marco' sweeps the curve of the Schiavoni till it is split here into two parts, namely, the Giudecca and the Grand Canals. On this spit of land it was decided in 1631 to erect a church to Our Lady of Salvation. The last great plague, which is said to have carried off 140,000 subjects of the Republic, ceased when the Doge and the surviving councillors made a vow to the Virgin Mary to build a shrine in her honour. Designs were at once begun by the leading architects, and, as an earnest of what was to come, a temporary wooden sanctuary was constructed on the chosen site, a bridge of boats was thrown across the entrance to the Grand Canal, and on the 28th of November the nobles and people of Venice, headed by the Doge, went in a procession from St. Mark's to hear Mass in the nucleus of the magnificent church we now see.

The designs of Baldassare Longhena were chosen, and during the forty following years Venice remained true to her vow, and spared nothing to enhance the glory of her 'Madonna della Salute.' The Patriarchal Seminary adjoining it was next built, and finally the Dogana, of which we have spoken—a series of buildings so admirably adapted to their situation, and giving such a beautiful sky-line from whichever side

LA DOGANA, VENICE









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it is approached, that we may well hesitate before speaking with disparagement of the work of the late Renaissance. Mr. Edward Hutton in *Venice and Venetia* truly remarks: 'We have seen and suffered Venice without the Campanile; but who could imagine her without the Salute? If that fell, Venice herself would seem to have suffered some irremediable change. It has stood there only since the seventeenth century, yet it seems as inherent a part of the city as St. Mark's.'

The absence of colour in the whole series of buildings is not missed as it would be on the exterior of St. Mark's, for it is generally seen across a wide space of water, and nature supplies to a great extent what art has not attempted. But, except for a few pictures, not many of us would go a second time to linger or to pray inside the Salute. The absence of colour makes us long to be out in the sunshine once more, and enjoy from her steps the russet tones of the Ducal Palace and the gilded pinnacles of St. Mark's across the water.

The anniversary of that first Mass, celebrated in the temporary shrine on the spot where the great church now stands, is kept up to this very day. I was in Venice on the 28th of this last November, and witnessed once more the procession file over the bridge of boats, ascend the stately flight of steps, and disappear through the great portal into the chilly vault within. It was a morning such as occurs in late autumn, when the sun is often hot enough to drive one out of a corner where the full effect of its rays is felt, and when the draught of a shady street strikes a chill to the marrow. All along the

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fondamenta, stalls for the sale of wax candles had been erected ; awnings were put up to screen the wax from the sun, while the vendors in the shady places flapped their arms and stamped about to keep warm. I stepped inside the church, and, though a thousand candles burned before the high altar, they only served to make the vast interior look more chilly. A notice that a sermon was to be preached at five o'clock that afternoon decided me to return there then ; for in Italy a sermon is an event, and the preacher is generally a man chosen for his eloquence. I was not disappointed, though the sermon was half-ended before I could get near enough to hear it. There was an immense crowd of people, and the chancel was now one blaze of lighted candles. The incense and smoke from the tapers, which hung like a mist over the tabernacle, and the light thrown back here and there from a star in the vaulting, were impressive. But how different was this from any great function in St. Mark's, where a warmth of colour is in the deepest shadows, and the lights glitter on golden surfaces.

A great concourse of people, stirred by religious fervour, is always a moving sight ; but even this seemed lacking. The grand periods, the fine gestures and the full rich voice of the preacher, failed to stir the congregation ; the better-dressed women seemed more concerned about their gowns being crushed than about the state of their souls, and the poorer ones stared in wonderment at the gorgeous scene before them. There was a fair proportion of men, but most of them seemed to pay little attention to the words of exhortation which flowed from the steps to the altar. The physical dis-



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comfort of standing in a tightly packed crowd may to a certain extent have accounted for all this. It is trying to see one's retreat hopelessly cut off, and I confess to a great sense of relief when the preacher came to the end of his peroration, and then slowly moved off to the sacristy.

We must not conclude from this that the people of Venice, or of the rest of Italy, are indifferent to their religion. I have not the least doubt that most of the candles annually placed before the altar are placed there as genuine thank-offerings—if not for the cessation of the plague—for more recent benefits received. That the congregation seemed unmoved by the eloquence of the preacher may have been more the fault of the preacher than of the congregation. Italians are more used to grandiloquent phrasing than we are, and are more able to discount its true value ; a distinct message, delivered with heartfelt conviction, is still able to move an Italian audience in a manner little conceived by Northern people.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BROKEN DISH, THE IMAGE AT THE FRUIT STALL, AND THE GONDOLIER'S LOSS

‘Les autres villes ont des admirateurs, Venise a des amoureux.’—SAINT-VICTOR.

SOON after settling down at ‘two two two’ in the Fondamenta Cabalā I started a little subject in a court near by. A high brick wall closed in one side of it, and tall houses with funnel-shaped chimneys closed in the other. The court narrowed down to the width of most Venetian alleys, by the garden wall making two angles within a few yards from the entrance, and on the wall between the angles was fixed a shrine to the presiding Madonna of the court. There are some hundreds of courts of this kind in Venice. But this one attracted me particularly owing to the colour of the shrine, and a laburnum which overtopped the wall on which the shrine was placed. Three young women, stringing beads, sat beneath the Madonna. They seemed amused when they saw me set up my easel, and the usual kind of remarks followed. ‘You must not paint me, Signore, I’m much too ugly ; Rosalinda will make a much prettier picture.’ Giggles from Rosalinda, as might be expected, and Rosalinda drags in Caterina. Caterina shows a mercenary spirit and says she will sit for five *lire* ; gets a gentle slap on the head from the first one ; and then, a chorus of laughter. As soon as I set to work they all ran away, and it was

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not till I assured them that (though they would all make pretty pictures) it was the Madonna whom I wished to paint, that they returned to their seats, and taking into their laps the wooden trays with the beads, soon got used to my presence.

Though chiefly engaged that morning on the shrine and the laburnum, I did not fail to take notes of the various poses which the actions of the girls' work necessitated, in the hope that the next day I might induce them to sit for me. A young loafer begged me to let him carry my traps home when I had finished, and seeing in him a possibly useful ally I engaged his services. I was very little disturbed till it was nearly time to leave off, when a woman entered the court with a large dish of *polenta*, and after she had had a look at my work, and made her comments, she proceeded to her house. She slipped on the doorstep and let fall her dish, and I can now see her look of dismay when she fully realised her disaster. The young women left their beads and ran to console her. Another dish was fetched and every bit of the precious food was scraped up and put in it. No *polenta* was actually lost, though considerably dirtied ; but, alas ! the dish was hopelessly smashed.

The loud lamentations brought a head out of every window, and sympathisers from most of the neighbouring doors. I asked the young loafer whom I had engaged what might be the value of the dish. 'Al meno cinquanta centesimi !' he replied with a stress on the *cinquanta*, as if it were an appalling sum of money. To relieve so much distress for fivepence seemed an opportunity not to be lost ; I gave the boy that amount,

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and asked him to give it to the poor woman. Fearing that the gratitude might be as demonstrative as the lamentations had been, I hurried to put my traps together and be off. I was, however, needlessly alarmed, for all the women, who ran my way, stopped short at the shrine, and sang praises to the Madonna for helping the poor woman in her necessity. And I—the vile instrument—had plenty of time to make my escape.

The lamp shone more brightly before the rude shrine when I returned to the court on the following morning. The *buon giorno* from the bead-stringers was deferential and accompanied with less giggling ; and without a word being said of yesterday's event, it was yet evident that I was there on a different footing. With the help of a few more fivepences, I was able to induce each young woman to keep a position long enough to enable me to complete my drawing.

Ruskin, commenting in *Stones of Venice* on the decline in the ecclesiastical architecture of the city, draws a comparison between the honour paid to Our Lord in the sixteenth century and that to Our Lady in the seventeenth. I will quote his own words :—‘ Our Lady of Salvation—“ Santa Maria della Salute,” Our Lady of Health, or of Safety, would be a more literal translation, yet not perhaps fully expressing the force of the Italian word in this case. The church was built between 1630 and 1680, in acknowledgment of the cessation of the plague ;—of course to the Virgin, to whom the modern Italian has recourse in all his principal distresses, and who receives his gratitude for all principal deliverances.



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‘The hasty traveller is usually enthusiastic in his admiration of this building; but there is a notable lesson to be derived from it, which is not often read. On the opposite side of the broad canal of the Giudecca is a small church, celebrated among Renaissance architects as of Palladian design, but which would hardly attract the notice of the general observer, unless on account of the pictures by John Bellini which it contains, in order to see which the traveller may perhaps remember having been taken across the Giudecca to the church of the “Redentore.” But he ought carefully to compare these two buildings with each other, the one built “to the Virgin,” the other “to the Redeemer” (also a votive offering after the cessation of the plague of 1576); the one, the most conspicuous church in Venice, its dome, the principal one by which she is first discerned, rising out of the distant sea: the other, small and contemptible, on a suburban island, and only becoming an object of interest because it contains three small pictures! For in the relative magnitude and conspicuousness of these two buildings we have an accurate index of the relative importance of the ideas of the Madonna and of Christ, in the modern Italian mind.’

Now, much as I admire Ruskin, I cannot follow him here. It might with as little truth be said of us that we honoured Paul the Apostle more than our Lord, seeing that our most conspicuous cathedral is dedicated to the former, and that the one dedicated to our Saviour is a comparatively mean building stuck away in Southwark. Or to confine the comparison to Venice itself:

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the decline had already set in when the 'Redentore' was built (a by no means 'small and contemptible' structure), while during the rise and during the greatness of Venice none of the three principal churches was dedicated to Christ, but to SS. Peter, Theodore, and Mark respectively. Venice having already churches dedicated to 'S. Salvatore,' or St. Saviour's, and to 'Il Redentore,' or the Redeemer, she decided to dedicate this one to 'La Madonna della Salute,' in the same way as Siena dedicated her first cathedral to 'La Madonna Assunta,' or Our Lady of the Assumption.

The exalted place given to the Virgin dates back some centuries earlier than the 'Salute,' even before the high-water mark of Christian art when Duccio, Giotto's rival, painted his famous *ancona* for the high altar of Duomo at Siena. Siena's prayer and the painter's own can still be read on the base of the Virgin's throne:— 'Holy Mother of God, be thou the cause of rest to Siena; be life to Duccio because he has painted thee thus.'

We must find other causes for the decline of Christian art than that of the undue exaltation of Our Lady.

Her name is on the lips of every poor Italian woman in trouble or in sorrow, and I have rarely heard it from any man in Venice, except as an accompaniment to a foul oath. Women naturally seek for sympathy in one of their own sex; and the dethronement of the Virgin in Protestant countries may have left a blank in the souls of her sex men can hardly appreciate. The Italian child is taught to appeal to the 'Bambino';

THE SALUTE FROM THE GIUDECCA









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and any one who has spent his Christmastide in Italy will be aware how large a share the Infant Saviour has in the affections of the children. There are none so poor but that they buy for their children a 'Presepio,' or toy manger, on the eve of the 'Natale.' Marvelously and wonderfully are they made, and they often excite laughter in strangers who are unconscious of the child-like faith which inspires their makers. In outlying districts the peasant has to be his own artist; and we may see a tiny doll lying on moss, possibly in a disused cigar-box, larger dolls representing the other holy personages, and something like an ox and an ass cut out in paper.

A child can have little sympathy with a Being beyond its comprehension, whereas 'Gesù Bambino' appeals to it at once.

The fervent Protestant who holds up his hands in horror at this early inculcation of idolatry misses the whole spirit of the thing. The child is not taught to worship the doll, but Him whom the doll represents; but where this spirit has been abused, and miraculous powers are attributed to the image, the Protestant has some reason to be shocked.

The court mentioned above is entered from a street formed by filling in a canal, and known as a *rio terrà*, and accounts for so wide a thoroughfare being found in so poor a quarter. At the further corner of this street stands a house which has seen better days, and is now tenanted by the very poor. Narrow lanes on each side of the house lead down to the Zattere, and the two corners of the frontage

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are made beautiful by canopied images of Christ on both. I would not dare mention them if I were not assured that they are scheduled, and so far safe from being carried off by some collector. The pose of the figures suggests Christ at the Column, the arms being caught back and pressed against the two faces of the angle. The proportions are very good, and they are chiselled with just enough finish to suit the height at which they are placed. Hewn out of a red marble, they have weathered down to lovely shades of russet and grey. Between the door and a corner of the house the wall space was taken up by a humble fruit-stall, kept by an old woman who dozed on a chair placed in the doorway itself.

I had been commissioned by a firm of dealers to paint a series of fruit and flower stalls ; and here, within a few hundred yards of my lodgings, I found as ideal a subject of that kind as I was ever likely to find anywhere. In the dark shades within the open door a dim light burned before a just discernible shrine ; strings of onions and garlic hung like a gold and silver garland, where they broke the hard outline of the door-post ; and baskets,

‘ Laden with fruit of fairest colours mixed,  
Ruddy and gold,’

gave the subject its central mass of colour.

I set to work as hard as I could, for the arrangement of one day may be very different from that of the next, all the goods being of course taken indoors at night. There was not much depletion through



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customers, which left the old lady more leisure to doze, and gave me opportunities to paint her. To ingratiate myself with her I bought some oranges and wished her good luck in selling the rest of them. 'Thanks to our Lord,' she said, pointing to the image, 'customers have never failed me since I've been here.'

I returned to Venice a few months ago after an absence of ten years, and I am thankful to say that the little figure of the 'Man of Sorrows' still watches over the humble stall, although the old woman who used to doze until awakened by a customer, is now having her long sleep before the final awakening.

It is a great relief after having worked some time in the streets, often with the nuisance of an admiring crowd, to take a gondola and drift about in the canals till some effect, or arrangement of form and colour, tempts one to make a study. Sometimes this may be found immediately; at other times, though one may pass numbers of interesting objects, either the lighting does not satisfy, or the best view does not come from the only spot where the gondola can be fastened. One may also find a perfect subject with a good place to moor the boat, but this may happen during a low tide, which leaves a drain exposed, and makes its neighbourhood an impossibility. A morning such as this will drive me on to the streets again, and except at the *traghetti*, or ferries, it may be a month before I again set foot into a gondola.

On first arriving in Venice the traveller very naturally makes considerable use of the gondola, for he is not only taken to the places he wishes to see, but he also has

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the advantage of a guide in the gondolier, and he is sufficiently far from his guide not to be bothered by too much chatter. When, however, he has learnt his way about on foot (not an easy thing, I admit) he will probably make little use of the gondola except on going excursions to the neighbouring islands or as a rest from the busy streets. Messrs. Methuen & Co. have lately published a book by Mr. H. A. Douglas, *Venice on Foot*, which will be a very great help to the pedestrian, and will give him valuable information about every building that has some historical associations, and of every tablet or inscription of archæological interest. But to return to our gondola—let us hear what Shelley says about it: ‘Gondolas themselves are things of a most romantic and picturesque appearance; I can only compare them to moths of which a coffin might have been the chrysalis. They are hung with black, and painted black, and carpeted with grey; they curl at the prow and stern, and at the former there is a nondescript beak of shining steel, which glitters at the end of its long black mass.’ The nondescript beak of shining steel is known as the *ferro*, and in a damp climate such as Venice it keeps the gondolier busy to polish it up to the required brilliance.

I seldom, at first, passed under a bridge without expecting to see the *ferro* come in contact with it, but it generally cleared the centre of the span by an inch or two. Sitting in the hollow of the boat the perspective makes the *ferro* appear higher than the arch, even when within a yard or so of the latter, and I have amused the gondolier when I called out to him to look

IN THE PIAZZETTA, VENICE







Antonio Farnese



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out for his iron. On leaving Venice after this my second visit, the tide happened to be rather higher than usual, and, when nearing the station, what I had often causelessly feared really happened. With a grind and a crack the *ferro* was wrenched off the gondola, and lost in the bottom of the canal. There was scarcely any hope of recovering it; for the *ferro* is heavy, and the mud is very deep.

This was a much more serious loss to the gondolier than the broken dish to the housewife. He was an old man, and would probably never be able to put by enough to buy a new one. He dug about with his oar to feel where it was stuck, but knowing that I had to catch the train he moved on. 'O Signore Dio!' he muttered in an undertone, expressing more than ever did the loud lamentations over the *polenta* dish.

I am not given to cursing my fate at not being born rich, though to me, as to most, a little more would be welcome. What little the artist earns by his profession gives him possibly more pleasure in the earning than falls to the lot of others. But at a moment like this, what a pleasure it would have been to compensate this poor old man for a loss sustained while in my service. Mr. Horatio Brown describes fully, in *Life on the Lagoons*, the construction of a gondola, giving the cost of all its parts, and the sacrifices each man makes to become owner of the one he plies. The *ferro* is an item costing £4, and God only knows how long it would take this man to save that sum out of his earnings; and few would hire a gondola without its chief ornament.



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The earnings of a gondolier are more precarious now than formerly, while the cost of living has considerably increased. He may possibly make a little more than he did during the tourist seasons ; but during the winter and during the hot summer months, when strangers are few, he is less in demand by the Venetians themselves than in the days before the *vaporetto*. The appearance of the first steamer on the Grand Canal must have been as hateful to the gondolier as the taxi-cab is to a hansom-cab driver. I would rather see the Grand Canal without them, but their usefulness is obvious. No wheeled traffic is possible in Venice, and the hire of a gondola is far beyond the means of the majority of the people ; it is therefore easy to comprehend what a boon it must be to numbers to be enabled to transport themselves and their burdens from one end of Venice to the other for the price of one penny. I realised this more fully during my last visit when an increase of a halfpenny in a fare was considered a public calamity. It struck me at the time that the singing in the wine-shops, frequented by the gondoliers, seemed heartier than usual.

The steamers not only curtail the gondolier's income, but they and the electric launches have seriously encroached on his capital ; for the gondola, to him that owns it, is his sole capital, and whereas in former days the life of a gondola was assessed at fourteen years, nine years is about all it is worth now. Its frail hull is well adapted to calm waters ; but it is sorely strained by the rocking caused by every passing steamer.



## CHAPTER V

### THE CAMPANILE OF ST. MARK'S

*'Anca morendo el xe sta galantomo'*

WHEN the spring of 1902 passed into summer, the attractions of the 'Piazza' often drew me there of an evening. I had many friends and acquaintances in Venice at that time ; some living there permanently, and others, like myself, making a long stay in search of artistic material. An excellent band plays most evenings, and all Venice flocks there to hear the music, and see the fair 'Veneziane' in their new summer frocks. The chairs are spread over a large part of the wide pavement in front of the principal cafés, and reach sufficiently close to the band-stand to allow those who use them to enjoy the music. I might feel sure of finding some of my friends outside the Café Florian, for, as that faces north, it is distinctly cooler than the Café Quadri on the opposite side, which can depend on more custom in the cooler seasons. As most of us rarely saw an English newspaper, the doings of the outside world formed less and less the subject of our conversation, and things Italian, and especially things Venetian, proportionately absorbed our interests.

The instability of the campanile was a subject which cropped up now and again in the local papers ; but as

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the imagination of few people could picture St. Mark's without its campanile, these rumours were heeded no more than, at the present time of writing, we heed the reports of the insecurity of St. Paul's Cathedral. May Londoners not be living in the fool's paradise of the Venetians at that time! Had any of us realised the actual danger, it is possible that we should have given our patronage to Quadri's café, which is at a much safer distance from the tower.

I left Venice on the 12th of July, and broke my journey to England at Bruges, arriving there on the 14th; and on picking up an evening paper, the first thing my eye caught were some headlines telling of the fall of the campanile.

Now, unless you have lived in Venice, know your Venice, and love Venice, you cannot conceive what a shock these headlines would give. The telegraphic message merely gave the hour of the disaster and the belief that no life was lost. No further news could lighten the loss; but the fear remained that a further message must of necessity tell of other buildings that had been crushed in the fall.

Turning over the pages of the *Book of Italian Travel*, compiled by Mr. H. Neville Maugham, and published in 1903, I find the following, under the heading, 'The Campanile of St. Mark's':—'Several incidental references to the Bell-tower will be found in our extracts, but at the very period when we were still seeking a detailed description of it, the unhappy news of its fall was made public in the following laconic despatch from Reuter:—

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‘ “ VENICE, 14 July (10.40 A.M.).’

‘ “ The Campanile of St. Mark's Cathedral, 98 metres high (about 318 feet), has just fallen down on the Piazza.

‘ “ It collapsed where it stood, and is now a heap of ruins.

‘ “ The Cathedral and the Doge's Palace are quite safe. Only a corner of the Royal Palace is damaged.

‘ “ It is believed, but it is not certain, that there has been no loss of life.

‘ “ A cordon of troops is keeping the Piazza clear.” ’

The author then gives us an extract from the *Times*, with an account of the catastrophe, by an American architect, whose little daughter was an eye-witness :—  
‘ Workmen had been repointing the Campanile and had discovered a bad crack, starting from the crown of the second arched window on the corner towards St. Mark's, and extending through the sixth window. This crack had shown signs of opening further, and they feared small fragments falling on the crowded Piazza ; so the music was quietly stopped in the hope that the crowd would naturally disperse. The effect was exactly the opposite to that desired. Every one rushed to the Piazza. At eleven I was under the tower, which rose in the dim moonlight. The crack was distinctly visible even in this half-light, but apparently menaced only a corner of the tower. On Monday, early, the Campanile was resplendent in the sunshine. At nine my little girl Katharine went off with her horns of corn to feed the pigeons. Mrs. —— was at S. Laccana, and I was



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near the Rialto sketching. The golden angel on the tower was shining far away. Suddenly I saw it slowly sink directly downward behind the line of roofs, and a dense grey dust rose in clouds. At once a crowd of people began running across the Rialto towards the Piazza, and I ordered my gondolier to the Piazzetta. On arrival the sight was pitiful. Of that splendid shaft all that remained was a mound of white dust, spreading to the walls of St. Mark's.

‘You have heard before now how the angel was found directly within a semicircle of the central doorway, and how the little porphyry column of the iron band received the brunt of the blow of the great marble blocks from above the hills of sand at the corner of the Basilica. All this, and the fact that there were no victims, not an injury to any one, justifies the feeling here that it was a miracle. Little Katharine was in the Square, and her account, like any child's, was extremely circumstantial. She says everything was quiet; two men were putting up ladders in the tower, when suddenly people began to cry out from under the arches (it was warm sunlight, and the Piazza was empty), little puffs of white flew out at the height of the first windows, great cracks started at the base and opened “like the roots of a tree,” a fountain of bricks began to fall all around the walls, and she says as she looked she saw the golden angel, upright and shining, slowly descending a full third of the height of the tower, when a great white cloud enveloped it.’

It is a consolation that the campanile brought down little else when it fell, though that little was a part of



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Sansovino's library, as perfect a bit of Renaissance as any in Italy. But think for a moment what it might have done, considering the short space which separated it from St. Mark's Church and the Ducal Palace. It is true that towers, when they do come down, generally crush in vertically instead of falling as a felled tree. We have an example of this when the spire of Chichester Cathedral came down. But when we consider the weight of the Renaissance spire, built in solid blocks of marble, and superimposed on a brick tower three hundred feet high, it seems extraordinary that it should have come down in little more than the space it covered.

While deliberating on the advisability of reconstructing the campanile, the first active work was to clear away the débris. This was confided to the archæologist, Signore Boni, who, during six months, was occupied on this ungrateful task. Every piece of cut stone, which might possibly be used again, was carefully placed on one side, while the mass of broken bricks and mortar was put into barges and carried out to sea. When the first barge-load left the wharf, it was accompanied by the artists and poets of Venice, who sang a requiem when the remains of their campanile were confided to the deep.

The 'Marangona,' the largest of the five bells, was found intact, the gilded angel not beyond repair, and the sculptured figures which adorned Sansovino's *logetta* were not sufficiently injured but what they might serve again, should it be decided to reconstruct the campanile.

A foreign invasion or a return of the plague could

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hardly have caused more discussion in Venice than the three points to be decided. Firstly, whether they should reconstruct ; secondly, whether the same site should be chosen were reconstruction decided on ; and lastly, whether they had not better, in doing so, keep to the design of the campanile before the Renaissance top was put on to it.

Most of the artists and poets opposed reconstruction in any form. The answer of one sums up the feeling of the majority :—‘ We cannot renew the life of the campanile. A new pile of bricks, with the pieces of broken marble from the old tower, will be as unattractive as the waxen figures, enclosing some bones of a martyr, which are shown for the edification of the faithful.’ A few felt that, although no new building could possibly replace the old one, yet, at the same time, it would replace the loss to the general appearance of the whole mass of buildings which surrounded it. The bulk of the people were, however, in favour of reconstruction, and this had a tangible proof in the rapid way in which the subscription lists were filled. I regret that it was not decided to follow the design of the superstructure similar to the one of 1489. There are drawings of it in existence, and not only is it in better keeping with the tower itself, but being much lower than the present one, it is more in scale with the church. However, nothing would satisfy the people but a campanile similar in every respect to the one they had always been used to.

When Signore Boni had removed the débris, the work of reconstruction was allotted to Signore Beltrami, and on the 25th of April 1903 the foundation stone

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was solemnly laid. The architect's plans and elevation had all been accepted, and, soon after the work was commenced, he threw up the undertaking and left Venice ; no persuasion on the part of the committee could induce him to reconsider his decision.

Matters were in that state when I returned to Venice, and to all appearance no work was done during the six months I remained there.

The church of St. Mark's certainly looked more imposing without the enormous campanile to unscale it ; and the beautiful entrance to the Doge's Palace, as well as a portion of that building, were then visible from the Square. The Square, however, looked too large—as if it missed the campanile, to reduce it to its proper proportions. There is none finer in the world ; but it were better not to have had that pre-eminence than, by the having, to detract in any way from the church it is named after.

But let us go to the island of San Giorgio to look once again at that mass of buildings which no city has ever equalled since Athens was in her prime, and then let us ask the question—Should the campanile rise again above Sansovino's masterpiece ? Without hesitation we should answer—Yes.

I have two photographs before me now, both taken from the same spot, and comprising the whole range of buildings from the ' Carceri ' to the gardens of the Royal Palace. The one was taken after the campanile had fallen, and in the second it dominates the whole panorama. The first shows a beautiful series of buildings, the second a glorious composition. And in justice



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to the new structure, I would defy any one to say whether the latter photograph portrays the old campanile or the one which has since replaced it.

Though the work seemed at a standstill during the six months of which I spoke, more was being done than we were aware of. Signore Beltrami's projected foundations were abandoned, and those proposed by Signore Daniele Donghi were adopted ; and to the latter eminent engineer was confided the whole task of reconstruction. The original piles were found to be in perfect condition, but a slight inclination to the north, of the old campanile, deemed it advisable to further compress the bed of clay, on which it stood, by driving in three thousand more piles around the existing ones. The raft of oak beams, which rested on the ancient piles, was allowed to remain : on this was superimposed a second one with the beams lying crossways, and above this a massive floor of blocks of Istrian stone. Next came the footings, the lowest extending over the added palisade and covering a third of the space of the stone floor, rising one above the other in diminishing proportions till they reached the level of the pavement, some fifteen feet above the raft.

Signore Donghi was allowed to use any means which modern science has taught us ; but he had strict injunctions to keep to the external appearance of the campanile he was replacing.

It was not till April 1906 that the receding platform, which rises some four feet above the pavement, was completed, and the foundation stone of



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the tower itself was laid. Then steadily it rose till its completion in April 1912; and, on the day of St. Mark, the five voices of the campanile, after a silence of ten years, were once more heard above the shouts of a rejoicing people.

The sound of each bell had been as familiar to every Venetian as the voices of his children:—the 'Marangona,' so called because its sonorous note awoke the carpenters (*i marangoni*) and the artisans of the Arsenal, an hour before daybreak; the 'Trottiera,' at the sound of which the magistrates were wont to saddle their horses and trot hurriedly to the Ducal Palace, for in earlier days the horse was not an unaccustomed sight in the streets of Venice; the 'Mezza Terza,' struck between eight and nine o'clock, and the 'Terza' at nine exactly—the old inhabitants to this day may still be heard to say 'sona terza' instead of 'suonano le nove.' The fifth and smallest bell is called 'Pregiera,' for it is the call to prayer.

The 'Marangona' was happily uninjured in spite of its fall of three hundred feet, and be it hoped that it may yet awaken the carpenters and others, instead of the steam-hooter which has of late disturbed our morning sleep. In course of time the four other bells had got out of tune with it, and as they had to be replaced, it was decided to tune them to the one remaining. The notes they now strike are A, B, C sharp, D and E respectively, making a musical cadence.

The second bell, now generally called 'La Nona,' reminds the Venetians of their late patriarch, the

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present Pope Pius x. For though he could not leave the Vatican to preside at the opening ceremonies, they hear his voice in that bell, his gift to his resuscitated campanile.

It is not within the scope of this book to give a technical account of the campanile's reconstruction, but rather of its appearance from an æsthetic point of view. Modern Italy may well be proud of her builders; and however badly she formerly restored her great monuments, or left them to fall into ruin, there is no country at present more jealous of her great inheritance.

Mr. Horatio Brown remarked to me one day that the fall of the campanile was a blessing in disguise, for it made the Venetians more alive to the dangerous state of most of their monuments. When I arrived in Venice some twelve months after the catastrophe, Venice was on crutches. The arcading of the 'Procuratie Vecchie' was entirely shored up, until the necessary repairs were done. Parts of St. Mark's were hid in scaffolding; the two great churches, the Frari and SS. Giovanni e Paolo, were hardly visible amongst the staging. Everywhere one went, great balks of timber shored up some church or palace where an ugly crack had given a note of warning. Venice was in an 'ugly funk,' as I heard it expressed, and well she might be, for few places have as much to lose.

Hoardings to the present day still hide the north-west corner of St. Mark's, and it is a relief to hear no adverse criticisms of the repairs, which are under the able direction of Signore Marangoni.

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It would have been difficult to sum up one's impressions of the new campanile until after a stay of some length in Venice. A brand new building surrounded by others, where the accidental colouring of time and weather blends harmoniously with the more positive touches of colour due to art, is bound to strike one unpleasantly. An attempt has been made to reproduce the hue of the old brick-work by the use of a greyish-red brick, and here, I think, they made a mistake. Red brick, greyed by time and weather, is a very different thing to the anæmic red of the present tower. Startling as a more positive colour would have been, it would in time have more nearly approximated that of the old tower, and even at present a slightly stronger red would have been pleasanter.

Had the campanile been crowned with the simple structure like the one destroyed by lightning early in the sixteenth century, it would not have had the top-heavy look that we are familiar with. But other considerations weighed more strongly with the builders. The money was subscribed to give the people back a campanile such as they had always known, and one with a top sufficiently massive to carry the golden angel which surmounts it. Though the actual angel only dates from 1822, it is the one known to living Venetians. It is not an artistic production, but up at that height it serves its purposes, as a finial and a vane, as did its predecessor. In Evelyn's Diary we come across this : 'On the top is an Angel that turns in the wind.'

But apart from any æsthetic considerations, there is



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much superstition attached to the angel, and a forcible illustration of this is the belief that it saved the church of St. Mark. When it fell it was shot forward till it reached the central doorway, and there it stopped ; its great bulk served to arrest the avalanche of material which followed it, and which might otherwise have brought down a portion of the facade. 'She has been our guardian angel,' said the people, 'while she hovered over our city ; and in her fall has she not saved our church ?' I was telling this to an American acquaintance, who took it less seriously. 'I reckon she was a fallen angel,' was his apt answer.

One building suffered in the fall of the campanile, and that was the northern face of Sansovino's library. The broken bits of marble have, however, been so marvellously pieced together that a newcomer would never suspect the damage it sustained. An amusing incident happened in the adjoining building, which forms a part of the south colonnade of the Square. A newly married couple were lodging there when the tower fell. The young man was just in the act of pouring out a cup of coffee, and was so startled by the crashing noise that, regardless of his bride, he rushed out of the house, and did not stop running till he reached the Rialto bridge, where he was seen holding the coffee-pot in his hand.

The only fatality recorded was that of two pigeons. When the threatening crack began to open, and people hurried to the Piazza to see the end, a voice was heard to exclaim in Venetian dialect : 'Anca morendo el xe sta galantomo !' Even in his death he bears himself



## THE CAMPANILE OF ST. MARK'S

like a gentleman, is the nearest translation I can give of it ; and this working man's remark was echoed all over Venice.

Pigeons are so intimately associated with St. Mark's that, when the resuscitated campanile was declared open, a pigeon sent from every town in Italy was let fly to carry home the good tidings.

Yes, they did well to rebuild their tower. It may for some while unpleasantly strike the eyes of those who knew the old one, but even now, when seen from afar, it is hardly distinguishable from the one it replaces. And Venice seen from across the water would hardly seem Venice without its campanile.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PIAZZETTA

‘La Piazzetta, observatoire du lion gardien de la République, et point de départ des expéditions destinées à faire respecter au loin sa foi et son pavillon.’—RIO.

**D**URING every successive visit to Venice I wished to paint the entrance to the Doge's Palace, with one of the columns, brought hither from St. Jean d'Acre, as the chief feature in the foreground. The light which to my thinking suited it best was at midday, and midday in the Piazzetta, with no means of fixing up an umbrella, would be physically impossible except during the cold months of the year. A continuance of sunshine is hardly to be expected then, and until a few months ago I never found the necessary conditions to make this subject a possibility. A week or more of sunny days towards the end of last November gave me my opportunity. Sitting with my back to the south wall of St. Mark's Church, I had frequently to go into the shade to cool down, and yet, had I been sitting in the shade to do my work, I should have been chilled to the marrow. These days are very beautiful, but no one knows better than the Italians themselves how treacherous they are. Possibly for the reasons mentioned above, I had never seen this subject treated before, and a sense of having made a discovery gave an additional zest to the pleasure in the work.

A FRUIT STALL AT SAN REMO









## THE PIAZZETTA

In the Piazzetta, of which this is a corner, turn which way you will, everything which meets the eye is beautiful, and the very best of its kind ; everything is also associated with the most stirring events in Venice's history. As a rest to the eyes after tracing the intricacies of the sculptured ornament, I had only to look due south and refresh them with a sight of the blue waters beyond the columns of St. Theodore and of the Lion of St. Mark ; the island of San Giorgio is midway between them and the low-lying strip of the Lido. To the left the double colonnade of the Ducal Palace vies with the frontage of Sansovino's library as a framing to a beautiful picture, and turning to my extreme right I face the loggia at the base of the campanile. To think of seeing all these things with one's back to the Basilica of St. Mark's ! The words of Sannazaro may well be forgiven him when, comparing Rome with Venice, he says : ' *Illam homines dices, hanc posuisse deos.*'

But to confine ourselves to the corner given in the illustration there will be more than enough to fill this chapter. The column is one of a pair which formed the pillars of the gateway of S. Sabbas at S. Jean d'Acre, a church held in common by the Venetians and the Genoese while the two republics were allied to fight the Saracens. During an interval of peace with their common enemy, the old jealousies cropped up again, and the Venetians under Lorenzo Tiepolo drove out the Genoese in 1256, and brought these two columns to Venice and placed them where they stand to this day.

## AN ARTIST IN ITALY

The porphyry figures, of which only two are seen, are at the angle of the south transept of the Basilica. There are four in all ; the second pair adjoining those depicted is on the farther face of the corner. Who placed them there, as well as whom they represent, is not known for certain. Archæologists presume them to be the four Emperors of Constantinople who reigned simultaneously for a short while during the middle of the eleventh century. Tradition has it that they represent four brothers, merchants from Albania, who came to Venice in a ship laden with treasure. That two came ashore to dispose of a part of their goods while the two others remained on board to guard what remained ; and that the first pair, being covetous of the share of the other, conspired to kill their brothers so as to get possession of the whole. They decided to invite them to a banquet, and to poison a cup they would offer them to drink to the happy issue of their venture. No sooner had the one pair succeeded in getting the other to drink of the poisoned cup than they became aware that their victims had poisoned some viands of which they (the first pair) had partaken. All four of them in consequence died. The Signory of Venice, ever ready to point a moral (especially one so much to its own advantage), seized upon the goods of the four brothers, and had these images put up as a memorial of such an unbrotherly proceeding.

Beneath the winged Lion of St. Mark is the entrance to the Ducal Palace ; it is called *Porta della Carta* from being the place where the scriveners plied their trade. Its architect was Bartolomeo Bon, and we find his



## THE PIAZZETTA

name inscribed on it, as well as the date of its construction (1440-1443). Over the lintel the Doge Francesco Foscari kneels before the lion with a paw resting on the open book; it is a modern copy of the original group which was destroyed by the mob in 1797. The beautiful niched figures on the jambs, the rich tracery of the window, and the highly decorated gable, relieved against the diapered brickwork of the palace, all combine to make this doorway the most ornate bit of Late Gothic in Italy, and possibly surpassed nowhere.

The main part of the palace is a century earlier than the doorway (1320-1350)—a date when Venetian Gothic had reached its greatest perfection. The double arcade has been the marvel of every student of architecture since the Gothic revival; and what is even more extraordinary is that when the greater part of the palace was burnt down in 1574, it should have been rebuilt in the same style—probably the only instance in Italy of Gothic work being done by architects of the Renaissance. Palladio was then building the 'Redentore'; he was consulted, and advised pulling down the whole structure and rebuilding it in a style corresponding to the library facing it across the Piazzetta. But, greatly to the credit of Sansovino, he prevailed on the Council of Ten to re-erect the destroyed parts so as to correspond with that which still remained. The angle, which appears in the illustration, dates from the latter period; and, though all the structural parts are purely Gothic, the spirit of the Renaissance is in the group above the lower capital, in spite of the attempt to give it a Gothic appearance.

## AN ARTIST IN ITALY

This group, 'The Judgment of Solomon,' is one of the three famous bits of sculpture which adorn the angles of the Ducal Palace. The two others are 'The Fall of Man' and 'The Drunkenness of Noah,' generally known, since Ruskin wrote his *Stones of Venice*, as the Fig-tree angle and the Vine angle. It is very interesting to compare the first group with the two latter. The sixteenth-century sculptor gives form and proportion to the figures such as the earlier men were not capable of, and yet who would not prefer the more archaic work of the older groups? What the figures may lack in modelling, on the Vine and Fig-tree angles, is more than compensated by the beautiful treatment of the growth and leafage of the trees by which they are known.

The three angles are further decorated by images of the archangels, one of which is placed above the capitals of the second tier of pillars, and a twisted column above each one carries the ornamentation up to the summit, which is crowned with a niche.

If we step inside the entrance gate, we are surprised to find that so much of the court is Renaissance, though dating nearly a century earlier than the actual portion facing the Piazzetta. The great staircase, immediately opposite the entrance, is imposing; but in spite of the colossal statues at the top and the beautiful reliefs by Vittoria, it lacks the dignity of the external façade.

On the highest landing of these stairs the Doges were crowned, the Patriarch repeating the words: 'Accipe coronam ducalem ducatus Venetorum.' It is also said that the Doge Marino Faliero was here ex-

## THE PIAZZETTA

cuted—possibly on the stairs which preceded these, for the actual ones were built more than a century after that event. The two bronze well-heads in the court are what attracts artists most ; they are of beautiful mid-sixteenth-century work, and comparable to that of the three pedestals in the Piazza of which we have spoken.

But let us return to our corner in the Piazzetta. Sheltered as it is from the north and the east, and catching the rays of the midday sun, it is a corner which attracts many on fine wintry days ; for not only can they thaw out the chill of the narrow streets, but a projection at the base of the Basilica makes a convenient bench. My crowd of admirers and critics was in consequence rather thicker here than usual. One old woman appealed to my sympathies by telling me that she was the widow of a water-colour artist who was able with work, such as mine, to earn twenty-five *lire* a day, and now she hardly knew where to turn for a meal. I felt she had me at a disadvantage ; I couldn't pass by on the other side, and I was too occupied to begin a cross-examination to ascertain whether this was a genuine case. I gave her a trifle, accompanied by that fatuous remark (which apparently lessens the hardship of parting) about people not putting by for a rainy day while earning good wages. 'He had a large family to provide for, "signore" ; and then you know what artists are.' Yes, I did know ; and I was relieved when she fell asleep, or she might have asked uncomfortable questions, which would have made my remark still more fatuous.



## AN ARTIST IN ITALY

Having exhausted me as a well of charity, I was used on the following days as an object-lesson to any of the crowd who looked worth more than a sixpence. On appealing to one, with her refrain : ' My husband when he was alive earned as much as twenty-five *lire* a day,' etc., she was answered : ' Well, what of that ? I daresay the gentleman here earns fifty.' Whether this was a form of consolation or not, I can't say.

During the fourth morning of her company she had got about as far as the ' twenty-five *lire*' part of her story when a policeman emerged from the colonnade of the palace, and judging from the speed with which the old lady moved off, I concluded that this was not a ' genuine case.'

Above our heads, high up on the Basilica wall, is an enshrined Byzantine Madonna, and daily at sundown the lamp before her image is lighted. History tells us that it has burned here nightly to commemorate the remorse of the Council of Ten for having unjustly condemned and executed a certain Giovanni Grassi in 1611, and whose innocence was proved ten years after his death, when a ' free pardon was granted.' While on the scaffold Grassi swore that the councillors who had condemned him would all perish within a year, and it is said that this came to pass.

The legend, which is as likely to be true as the above, tells us that the lamp is lighted to commemorate the ' Morte Inocente' of a baker's boy who was executed for a murder, on the evidence of the sheath of the dagger with which the crime had been committed, and which he had innocently picked up, being found



## THE PIAZZETTA

in his possession. The people, knowing nothing of Grassi and his history, will to this day point out the light as the '*boun' anima del fornaretto*,' the good soul of the little baker.

The executions took place between the columns of St. Theodore and of the Lion of St. Mark ; and we are told that the condemned, before meeting their fate, would turn towards the image of this Madonna and repeat the '*Salve Regina*.'

There is great animation in the Piazzetta once a month when the winning numbers of the State lottery are announced from the loggia of the campanile; and no one can conceive how much these lotteries enter into the lives of the people unless they have lived in a country where the State encourages this form of gambling. To hit upon a lucky number is the absorbing thought of many. Usually they stake their money on three numbers, and the odd circumstances accounting for the ones chosen would fill a book. The most amusing one, I lately heard, was of a maidservant who won a prize, and on being congratulated by her mistress, said she was quite certain of winning something, for she had dreamt of the number seven three nights running, 'and three sevens being twenty-seven, I felt certain of that being a winning number' !

I have had a man leave me in the midst of a conversation owing to something suddenly suggesting three numbers, and he would instantly run off to try his luck. It seems curious that while some nations do all they can to put a check on betting, others should encourage it by a State lottery. How far the Church may

## AN ARTIST IN ITALY

discourage it, I can't say ; but, curiously enough, it was in a church where I first became aware of the hold the lottery has on the minds of some people. I was painting in the Duomo at Genoa, and had many a chat with the sacristan, who seemed interested in the progress of my work. Having told me all about his family affairs, he asked me if I was a family man. On telling him that I had a wife and three sons, he inquired the ages of my boys. Some visitors entering the church, he had to leave me and show them round ; but no sooner had they gone than he hurried back to me, and asked me once more to repeat my sons' ages. These he noted down, and hurried out of the church to get to the office in time to stake his money on the three figures I had innocently given him. I worked there several days after that, and the subject of the forthcoming lottery always cropped up. Whether he is still sweeping the floor of the Duomo, or whether he has been able to set himself up as a café proprietor on the strength of the numbers being successful, I cannot say, for I left Genoa before the fateful day.

I do not propose to take my reader through the rooms of the Ducal Palace, but try and seek amongst the lesser things of Venice objects which are not fully described in every book written on that city — an exception, however, being made in favour of the Colleoni statue.

## CHAPTER VII

### VEROCCHIO'S COLLEONI, S. ZANIPÒLO AND OTHER MATTERS

*'Jusqu'aux ruelles, aux moindres places,  
il n'y a rien qui ne fasse plaisir.'*—Taine.

I WAS not long in seeking out the Colleoni statue when I paid my second visit to Venice. The danger of being called away suddenly without having seen this work of art was not to be risked. I was shown its position on a plan of the city and told how to get there, and nothing seemed easier ; but if any one boasts about knowing Venice on foot thoroughly, no better test can be set him than to find the Colleoni from any given place—no questions being asked on the way. I know of no place where it is easier to hopelessly lose one's way than in Venice, unless it be in the old quarters of Cairo. A blind alley in both places often obliges the stranger to retrace his steps ; the streets are straighter in Venice than in Cairo, but the new-comer is continually taking the one that has no bridge at the end to help him over the canal that blocks the way. Should time be no object, few places offer greater compensation to him who has lost his way ; for as Taine observed, in the smallest alley and humblest court there is always something to give us pleasure.



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I was on my way to a subject near the Colleoni long after I flattered myself that I knew my Venice. I failed to find what I sought, but soon found consolation in the little subject used as the frontispiece. I left off before I needed, thinking that I was a long way from the Piazza, and wished to be there at a certain hour. I found to my surprise that the other side of the shop I was painting was in the Piazza itself.

However familiar reproductions may have made the Colleoni statue, it nevertheless comes as a surprise to any one first beholding it. An agreeable one certainly in my case, for unless the original be seen on its high pedestal it is not possible to realise how striking is the effect. The majestic pose of the figure astride his heavy charger is what first impresses one; and next, the head of the man is of so striking a personality that every other detail is for the moment overlooked. There is so much individuality in the face that it assures one of its being a likeness. But mere portraiture was of secondary consideration to the artist—the personification of the successful warrior was the primary aim. How he succeeded is apparent at the first glance at this masterpiece.

It is hard on Verocchio that the credit of the work should be disputed between him and Leopardi. It is true that he died before the statue was cast, and that this difficult task was confided to the Venetian sculptor; but it is monstrous that the only record of authorship on the monument should be ‘Alexander Leopardus F. opus.’ It is contended that this may mean ‘fuit opus,’ and only refers to the casting; but as we are so accus-



## VEROCCHIO'S COLLEONI

tomed to see the word 'fecit' before 'opus,' it looks as if it were intended to deceive. The pedestal is undoubtedly the work of Leopardi, and had he inscribed his name there instead of on the girth of the horse, all would have been well.

This is the second known equestrian statue since the revival of Italian art. The first one erected is that to Erasmo di Marni, more commonly called Gatta Melata, by Donatello, and which stands in the space in front of the Duomo at Padua—a great artistic achievement, and ranked by some critics as even a greater work than the Colleoni. I have studied them both carefully, and making due allowance for Verocchio having had the more inspiring subject, I consider the Colleoni the greater work of the two. I see that Ruskin confirms this: 'I do not believe that there is a more glorious work of sculpture existing in the world than the equestrian statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni.'

We are told that when Verocchio had completed the model of the horse he was informed that the Signory had commissioned Vellano of Padua to make the figure. Taking this as a reflection on his art, he knocked off the horse's head and fled from Venice. On his returning to Florence he received a decree from the Signory of Venice forbidding him, under pain of death, ever to set foot again in Venetian territory. He sent them an answer that they need not fear his doing so, for he was aware that if his head were cut off the Signory could not replace it, whereas he could at any time replace the head of his horse by a better one.

Better counsels prevailed after a while, and the

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decree was rescinded ; Verocchio was invited to return to Venice, and an increased sum of money was offered him to complete the statue. Thus pacified, he resumed the work ; but he had hardly made the model when he fell ill, and soon after died. He left a will recommending his pupil, Lorenzo di Credi, to the Signory as the one best able to complete the work. His wish was, however, not acceded to, and the Venetian, Allesandro Leopardi, was commissioned to finish it.

John Addington Symonds gives a very picturesque account of Colleoni in *New Italian Sketches*. He sums up his character as follows :—‘ While immersed in the dreary records of crimes, treasons, cruelties, and base ambitions, which constitute the bulk of fifteenth-century Italian history, it is refreshing to meet with a character so frank and manly, so simply pious and comparatively free from stain, as Colleoni. The only general of his day who can bear comparison with him for purity and public life and decency in conduct was Federigo di Montefeltro. Even here the comparison redounds to Colleoni’s credit ; for he, unlike the Duke of Urbino, rose to eminence by his own exertion in a profession fraught with peril to men of ambition and energy. Federigo started with a principality sufficient to satisfy his just desires for power. Nothing but his own sense of right and prudence restrained Colleoni on the path which brought Francesco Sforza to a duchy by dishonourable dealings, and Carmagnola to the scaffold by questionable practice against his masters.’

It is greatly to his credit if a half of the good qualities attributed to him are true, for the trade of

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'condottiere' during the fifteenth century was not an ennobling one. They fought for no principle, but only for the cause of him who best paid their services. Colleoni amassed a great fortune, which he left to the Venetian state, making only one stipulation, that an equestrian statue of himself should be placed in the Square of St. Mark's. The arrogant look which the sculptor has given to the clean-cut features of his model is accounted for. No statue has ever been placed in front of the great Basilica, and the Signory deemed that Colleoni had been sufficiently paid for his services without according him this posthumous honour. Nevertheless, they pocketed the money, and compromised matters by erecting the statue in front of the 'Scuola di S. Marco'—a very different monument to the Basilica. The danger is happily passed now of an inferior monument being placed on the spot coveted by Colleoni; for some forty years ago the Italians, flushed by a sense of independence, placed statues, to whom they owed their nationality, in the most conspicuous spaces in every town in Italy, and though Victor Emmanuel was more deserving of their gratitude than ever was Colleoni, there was not a second Verocchio to create a work of art worthy to stand in front of St. Mark's Basilica.

The Venetians showed a sense of proportion which seemed lacking in most other parts of Italy during the wave of patriotic fervour which swept the country in the seventies. They put up an equestrian statue to their first king on the Riva degli Schiavoni, a fine site overlooking the lagoon, but sufficiently far from their historic monuments not to make a jarring note. Like-



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wise the statue to Garibaldi, which is placed in a newly made street called after him, and honour was thus paid while dishonouring nothing which stood there before.

Though failing to stand before the 'St. Paul's' of Venice, Colleoni keeps guard, as it were, outside its 'Westminster Abbey.' The church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo adjoins the 'Scuola di S. Marco', which together make a fine setting to the statue. 'S. Zanipolo,' as the church is called by the Venetians, is a fine fourteenth-century Gothic structure; but like its sister church of the Frari, its chief interest lies in the monuments it contains. It is the resting-place of the Doges Michele Morosini, of Leonardo Loredan, of Vendramin, Corner, Malipiero, Venier, and Paolo Steno; also of three Mocenigo Doges of that name. The tombs of Marco Corner and of Tommaso Mocenigo are of these the most beautiful; and in the Cappella di S. Pio there is a tomb of Jacopo Cavalli, commander of the Venetian troops during the Chioggian war, which is also a very beautiful bit of fourteenth-century work. Mere size and costliness of material characterise the tombs of the later Doges, and this reaches a climax when we come to those of the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries. To have made them any higher would have entailed the raising of the roof. Most painters will stop before the resting-places of Giovanni and of Gentile Bellini, and regret that the greatest monument to the former—his famed altar-piece—perished in the fire of 1867, which completely destroyed the chapel of S. Peter Martyr together with one of Titian's masterpieces.



## VEROCCHIO'S COLLEONI

Thankful as we may be that the works of art, contained in this as well as in most of the churches in Venice, have not been removed to museums or picture galleries, nevertheless we cannot get over the unpleasant impression a turnstile and ticket office make on entering this as well as five of the other churches in Venice. It might be said that I, personally, have nothing to complain of, having been graciously given a *permesso* which admits me to any gallery or church in Italy which has become national property; and this is freely given by the Ministry of Education to any artist who furnishes sufficient proof of his being one professionally. The unpleasant feeling remains, nevertheless; a church is primarily a place of worship, and the money-changers are as out of place as in the Temple of old. Some blame attaches to the Church for the neglect of its art treasures, and the Government may be justified in taking them into her charge; but surely the cost of repairs might be levied in some more seemly manner.

The frontage of the 'Scuola di S. Marco,' with the bridge crossing the canal of the Mendicants, together with the foreshortened west end of the church, make a very picturesque setting to Verocchio's masterpiece. If we cross over the bridge, zigzag about in a south-westerly direction, and cross several more bridges, we may, if we don't lose ourselves, eventually find ourselves in the Campo S. Bartolomeo in the course of some twenty minutes. Here another statue will arrest our attention. It is mentioned in all guide-books on account of the person whom it represents, for he is no other than Venice's great dramatist, Carlo Goldoni; but no

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mention is made of the statue as a work of art, which I can only put down to the usual prejudice against all contemporary workmanship. It is the work of the sculptor Dal Zotto, and was erected in 1883. As a portrait, therefore, it cannot claim to much authority; but how admirably has the artist entered into the spirit of the eighteenth century, and given us the man who, though himself so much of it, spared not to lash its foibles with his cutting satire. Verocchio himself has not given us a truer picture of a fifteenth-century condottiere than has Dal Zotto of an eighteenth-century playwright. It is altogether an admirable little statue.

A short street leads from this 'campo' to the Rialto Bridge. Here it is well to pause, not only to admire the bridge, but to study the life and character of the people. The jewellers' shops have now mostly gone to St. Mark's Square, but the humble necessities of life are still sought for here by the mass of the people. Stalls of various articles line each side of the main passage over the bridge, and when we descend to the other side of the Grand Canal we enter the very heart of the city. It is to this quarter, and not so much of the bridge itself, that Shakespeare alludes in the *Merchant of Venice* :—

‘Signior Antonio, many a time and oft  
In the Rialto you have rated me.’

The modern Shylock may still be seen bargaining with the true Venetian; and as far as the love of money is concerned, there is little to choose between them. Fruit, vegetable, and grocery stores jut out from under each arch of the colonnade which runs along the main

A STALL AT THE RIALTO, VENICE









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thoroughfare ; and in the open space before S. Giacomo di Rialto huge awnings shade the flowers and fruits from sun and weather. Beyond and to the right of this space we reach the *erberia*, and here, in the fall of the year, great piles of queer-shaped gourds arrest our attention. They seem to be grown for the special delight of the Venetians, for I cannot recall seeing such hobgoblin-looking pumpkins in any other market-place in the world. Beyond this is the fish market, occupying the angle at the junction of the Grand Canal and the Rio S. Aponal. The former structure has been swept away and a brand new building placed in its stead, and in this case I don't think even Ruskin could have regretted the older while contemplating the new. What has been swept away was a former roof of a railway terminus, bought second-hand, and rigged up here as a covering to the market. For years this disfigured a fine site on the Grand Canal, and being exactly opposite the 'Ca d'Oro,' one of the most beautiful palaces on the main waterway, one felt ashamed of one's own times for producing so monstrous a structure. All credit is due to the designer of the new building ; it is no slavish copy of some earlier one, but imbued with the spirit of the fourteenth century, and well adapted to the uses of the present one. It was refreshing to find a change in Venice so distinctly to its advantage.

I spent many happy months in this part of the city. My rooms were in a small palace on the Rialto side of the Grand Canal, and which they overlooked, and, warmed by the morning sun, it was delightful to watch the boats taking their goods to the central market. I

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was near enough to step out and collect my breakfast at the fruit stalls, where, for a few *soldi*, I could procure enough figs and grapes to make my meal, and to increase my popularity with my landlady's little children.

The Rialto was thus my chief sketching-ground, and a special little stall at the foot of the bridge was a very favourite subject. I painted it once again during my last stay in Venice, partly for the sake of old times, and partly for the brilliant bit of colour which the chrysanthemums gave it. I had to be early on the spot, for these flowers are in great demand during the 'Ognisanti,' when every one takes a bunch to adorn a grave in the cemetery island of S. Michele.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE VENETIAN SCHOOL OF PAINTING

*‘Il disegno di Michael Angelo e ’l colorito di Titiano.’—JACOPO ROBUSTI.*

IT is difficult in a few pages to do more than just touch on such things in Venice which appealed most to the writer. But as a painter I must not ask my reader to follow me to other Italian cities before making some mention of the Venetian school of painting. Its beginnings do not, for obvious reasons, date back as far as the Ravenna mosaics or those of Rome, and the Primitives (to use a convenient term) are of a later date than those of Siena and Florence. But once we get into the fifteenth century, the painters of Venice can hold their own with any others of that time, and the school continued to produce great artists long after the others in Italy were sinking into decline.

Let us look at some of the work of Giovanni Bellini. Where can we find a more beautiful altar-piece than the Bellini in S. Zaccaria, unless it be the Giorgione at Castelfranco? His picture of SS. Jerome, Christopher and Augustine, with a landscape background, in S. Giovanni Chrysostomo is possibly a still nobler work, were we able to see it in a better light. The one which we can study properly (without getting the sacristan to remove the tall candles and some

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rubbishy altar decorations, as is the case at S. Zaccaria) is in the sacristy of the Friari, the church which rivals SS. Giovanni e Paolo as a Venetian pantheon ; and, possibly because I know it best, it is the Bellini I always think of with the greatest pleasure. It is difficult to conceive a more beautiful altar-piece than this, and I cannot recall any signs of restoration, the work appearing in as fine a state of preservation as when first painted. The framing of the triptych (the *tabernacolo*, as the Italians call it) is a perfect setting to the composition. The central panel rises in a half-circular top above the two outside ones, and on it we have the enthroned Virgin holding the Child, who stands on her knee. It was painted during the latter years of the artist, but it shows no signs of a failing hand ; in the words of Rio : ‘ He has thrown aside that veil of melancholy in which he loved to wrap the countenance of the Virgin ; it is no longer the Mother of the Seven Sorrows which he has painted, but rather the source of his joy—*causa nostrae laetitiae*—to whom the painter has addressed this short prayer :

‘ Janua certa poli, duc mentem, dirige vitam,  
Quae peragam commissae tuae sint omnia curiae.’

Ruskin, speaking of him, says : ‘ John Bellini is the only artist who appears to me to have united, in equal and magnificent measure, justness of drawing, nobleness of colouring, and perfect manliness of treatment, with the purest religious feeling.’ How the old painter must have loved children, to have been able to give us two such delightful little boys who, winged as cherubim,

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are playing musical instruments at the foot of the throne. A pair of saints occupy the whole length of each adjoining panel ; they are robed ecclesiastics—dignified men, neither arrogant nor servile. The disposition of the light and shade seems as faultless, in regard to the composition as a whole, as is the rich and harmonious colouring.

I paid a weekly visit to the Accademia, and though pictures never give me their greatest pleasure when seen together in large quantities, it is nevertheless very interesting to compare the characteristics of each author, and to see the influence which they had on the others. But although less well lighted and often surrounded with tasteless ornaments, sacred art should be seen in sacred buildings, and in the place for which it was designed. Rows of altar-pieces, numbered and catalogued, in a gallery always leave an impression of hanging in an art dead-house, to be identified by the ghosts of those who worshipped before them ; and when they find their way into a wealthy man's dining-room they become an offence. It is less painful in our own National Gallery, as we have no altars worth the robbing, and we don't identify these pictures with the life of the people as we do in the Latin countries. An altar-piece of the late Renaissance seems less out of place in a gallery, because the religious sentiment of the painters is so little evidenced. To thoroughly enjoy the old masters go and see them when possible in the churches or halls for which they were originally intended, and this one can still do in a large measure in Venice. To take a half day off my work, and hunt up the Bellinis and the



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men of his time, was indeed a pleasure, especially if accompanied by a sympathetic companion.

A profane subject of Giovanni Bellini in the Accademia is very interesting ; it is called an allegory. Five small panels, framed as a predilla, represent, as far as I can make out, the power of Love and Truth. Whether this be correct or not does not much matter ; its interest lies in its being a pagan subject treated by a genuinely religious painter, and it seems to me far more religious in feeling than most of the religious subjects painted later by men who were pagan at heart. The nude figure of Truth lacks the physical beauty associated with pagan art, while many Madonnas and saints of Titian or Veronese might pass as pagan goddesses were it not for their clothes. Ruskin gives us an extract from Albert Dürer's diary which throws some light on Bellini's character:—'I have many good friends among the Italians who warn me not to eat and drink with the painters, of whom several are my enemies, and copy my picture in the church, and others of mine, wherever they can find them, and yet they blame them, *and say they are not according to ancient art, and therefore not good.* Giovanni Bellini, however, has praised me highly to several gentlemen, and wishes to have something of my doing: he called on me himself, and requested that I would paint a picture for him, for which he said he would pay me well. People were all surprised that I should be so much thought of by a person of his reputation: he is very old, but is still the best painter of them all.'

Ruskin's comments are worth repeating:—'A



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choice little piece of description this, of the Renaissance painters, side by side with the good Venetian, who was soon to leave them to their own ways. 'The Renaissance men are seen in perfection, envying, stealing, and lying, but without wit enough to lie to purpose.' These comments are more sweeping than Dürer's diary warrants. We can hardly conceive Giorgione, Titian, Carpaccio, and Mantegna (just to mention a few), sufficiently jealous of the German's work to wish to poison him. That some others resented a foreigner being called in to execute some of the commissions is conceivable, and we must not forget that Venice then swarmed with painters, many of whom are now completely forgotten. 'The good Venetian,' was he not himself, and were not all his pupils, of the Renaissance ?

Let us turn to Gentile Bellini, the brother of Giovanni. We see him at his best in the Accademia, in his famous series of the 'Miracle of the Holy Cross,' large canvases full of incident and intensely interesting to all lovers of Venice. In these, as well as in the Carpaccios and the Mansuetis in the same room, we get as true views of Venice of the fifteenth century as ever Canaletto gave us of the eighteenth. Apart from this topical interest, they are great works of art ; and if we step into the next room we see how the art of Gentile Bellini is developed and carried even further by Vittore Carpaccio in his nine canvases of the story of S. Ursula. These are, I am told, still on the walls for which they were originally painted, this part of the Accademia being a portion of the conventual buildings

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of the S. Carita. The story is so naïvely told that the myth is much more of a reality to all who have contemplated this series, than many authenticated historical events of the Dark Ages. It is difficult to choose which of these canvases give us the most pleasure—possibly ‘The Arrival of the Ambassadors’ and ‘The Departure of the Bride and Bridegroom,’ and yet there is something so personal of the artist in ‘The Dream of S. Ursula’ that this is the one which fastens itself most on our memory.

We enjoy Carpaccio even more in the little church of S. Giorgio degli Schiavone. For one thing, we go there to see him and nothing else, and secondly, the master has developed his own personality more than in the Ursula series, where the influence of Gentile Bellini is more manifest. It is difficult to compare his work with that of his contemporaries, and I think futile to speak of him as the greatest of the quattrocento men; he is one by himself, and his works are best compared amongst themselves. The first picture of the series, the ‘St. George and the Dragon,’ is, as we might expect, the one to arrest our attention most. We are at once captivated by the handsome young saint, and the very mention of chivalry must bring that picture back to the mind of any one who has seen it. At a first glance we hardly know whether to take the second picture seriously. The captive dragon has had a bad time, and his woe-begone appearance is distinctly comical. But if Carpaccio makes one inclined to laugh at times, I fully believe it is his intention—his dragon is such a loathsome-looking beast that we kill him with

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ridicule before he is finally despatched with St. George's spear. On a second visit, I am not sure whether I did not like this picture better than the first. The Baptism of the King and his daughter by the youthful saint is as delightful in its way as the others. The story is told in such a child's fairy-book manner that it appeals to what child nature we may be fortunate enough still to possess. But no appearance, mind you, is there of a childish manner in the treatment. Every detail is perfect of its kind ; and full of fancy as each picture is, nothing is slurred, and everything is beautifully drawn from a happily selected nature. The child of S. Tryphonius, subduing by the power of prayer the basilisk, the subject of the fourth picture, is a beautifully finished work. Should we be hazy as to what a basilisk is like—why here is the very thing. The fifth picture of 'Our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane' is in too dark a corner fully to appreciate it. But as a work of art, pure and simple, I should place No. 6, 'The Calling of St. Matthew,' as the gem of the series. In all the qualities which go to make a fine picture, Carpaccio has here surpassed himself. No. 7 starts the S. Jerome series. The first one, where the saint quells the lion, from which his monastic companions flee, is difficult to take seriously, and I fancy that the artist was laughing up his sleeve. The death of S. Jerome, the next subject, is impressive and very beautiful, and also the last of the series, of S. Jerome in his study.

I confess I can't follow Ruskin in the symbolical meaning underlying every detail. The artist painted what he felt was appropriate, and did it to the best of



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his powers ; the deep spiritual meaning of every detail would probably have surprised him had he been told of it.

The high praise Ruskin, in *St. Mark's Rest*, bestows on the Carpaccio in the Correr Museum has given that small picture a prominence which might have surprised its author still more, for I believe it is simply a portrait he was commissioned to paint of two plain and uninteresting women, and being unable to make much of them, he made the most of their pets and the other accessories. These he painted with his habitual skill, as if to compensate for the unattractiveness of his two sitters.

There is much of interest in the 'Museo Civico,' which is chiefly made up of the Correr and Morosini collections. There are a great many pictures of the 'quattrocento' summed up in guide-books as rubbish. They are by no means all rubbish ; and it is also interesting to realise how in that great period each master had his followers, who, as now, often exaggerated the defects without giving the qualities of him they wished to emulate. Had I not so often heard it remarked by cultured people, how badly a modern exhibition compared with one by the old masters, the following remarks would be superfluous :—A collection of old masters often is, or should be, a choice selection of the works of the noted artists of various schools, and spreading over a period of several centuries ; whereas a modern exhibition is usually a collection of works done within a year or two of the time it is held, and limited more or less to the artists of one country. Had annual exhibitions of some hundreds of pictures been held



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during the past centuries, each limited more or less to works of one school, and also to those just completed, it would then be fair to compare one of these exhibitions to one now held. A room in this museum, which Augustus Hare dismisses as 'mostly rubbish,' might be taken as a sample of the average work of any given year of the late 'quattrocento.' Many of the criticisms now annually heard would have equally applied then. The argument that the older men painted noble subjects, worthy of being placed in the Sanctuaries, is easily dismissed: the older men would have painted no altar-pieces if, as now, altars were not considered worthy of the best decoration; they would have been obliged, as now, to paint such subjects as were likely to find a purchaser. The old masters loved their work none the less because they lived by it, and the same thing applies now, and will do so as long as any art remains.

The stars of the two Bellini had shone for more than half a century, and Carpaccio's was nearing its zenith, when one arose more brilliant than these; it shed its light for a short space, and went to its setting. Giorgio Barbarelli came as a youth to Venice from his native Castelfranco to study his art under the guidance of Giovanni Bellini. His talent soon attracted the attention of all, and Giorgio soon became famous as Giorgione, or the great George.

Few undisputed works of his remain; his early death prevented these ever having been a great number, and of these we have been deprived of most by the ravages of time. We vainly seek his work at the

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Accademia. It is true there is one in part attributed to him, and finished by, some say, Palma Vecchio, others Paris Bordone. But to find an undisputed one, and not much injured by restoration, we must go to the Giovanelli Palace. It is called 'La Famiglia di Giorgione,' is also known as 'The Soldier and the Gipsy,' and its title may yet be often changed, as it is difficult to say exactly what the subject means. But who cares? be he alive to the beauty of the colour and the sentiment of the picture. A nude woman is seated on a bank giving her breast to a child, and a young man holding a lance converses with her from across a brook; trees and buildings against a movemented sky form the background. This is his motive, and in using it he gives us the very essence of what is pictorial. Everything in the beautiful landscape is suggestive of the north of Italy, but selected and refined by the imaginative reason of the painter. Such landscape as Giorgione and his followers introduce into their figure-subjects can only be described as Giorginesque.

He was but a year or two older than Titian, and, though both were fellow-students of Giovanni Bellini, Titian is usually spoken of as a pupil of Giorgione. Many early Titians have been mistaken for those of his companion, and many pictures which were long attributed to Giorgione have since been proved (as far as such proving is possible) to have been painted by fellow-students who came under his influence. His life was a short one, but his influence lasted as long as the Venetian school was pre-eminent.

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To think of him and Titian doing house-painter's work in a perishable material gives us an idea of the exuberance of talent which existed at that period. When we cross the Rialto Bridge we can still see some stains of colour on the walls of the 'Fondaco dei Tedeschi,' all that remains of the glorious frescoes which these two young men were commissioned to paint. With Giorgione begins the *genre* picture, that is, a picture not necessarily painted for a particular place in a church or secular building, but such as any wealthy art patron might purchase to hang on the walls of his palace. One authenticated altar-piece of his remains, and is the one which makes a journey to Castelfranco a necessity to any student of this most fascinating master. We are told that the warrior saint, S. Liberale, who stands on one side of the enthroned Madonna, is a portrait of the painter. We fortunately possess in our National Gallery a small replica by him of this figure.

The peculiar charm of the Venetian school should strike any one who visits the Uffizi Gallery at Florence, for placed on one wall, and side by side, we find a beautiful Giovanni Bellini and a Giorgione, and not far off a gemlike bit of colour by Carpaccio. There is a vagueness as to the subject in all three pictures which contrasts with the more rigid Florentine school; but after the fatigue of visiting the numerous rooms, and marvelling at the wealth of art they contain, we can return here for rest and refreshment. These pictures might strike one less if seen in Venice, from that peculiar charm being so often met with there.



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Sebastian del Piombo, another pupil of Bellini, was under the spell of Giorgione till he left Venice, and then he succumbed to the influence of Michelangelo.

Cima da Conegliano, Carlo Crivelli, and Catena continued more in the footsteps of their aged master, and seemed less influenced by the talents of their attractive fellow-student.

When little more than thirty years of age Giorgione died, it is said from a kiss he received from his lady-love, who had taken the infection of the plague.

Titian, his fellow-student, whose art he helped to form, survived him for sixty-five years, and as his work is found in every gallery in Europe, it is not to Venice we must especially come to study him. By a curious fatality the disease which carried off Giorgione in his youth neither spared Titian when he was in his ninety-ninth year.

Many writers on art place Titian as the greatest painter the world has ever seen. And if we study his work away from Venice we may easily fall into that opinion. In London, his 'Bacchus and Ariadne' might justly be claimed as the greatest work in the National Gallery. The Titians in the Louvre are perhaps the finest works there, and in Rome is there a picture which gives us greater pleasure than 'The Sacred and Profane Love,' in the Borghese Villa? We might repeat this in many other places. But in Venice such a mighty genius followed in his footsteps, and left such an amazing quantity of great works, that Titian holds there a second place.

Jacopo Robusti, known as Tintoretto, was forty



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years junior to his great predecessor, being born in 1518. He was a pupil of Titian's for a short while, but soon fell out with his master, and worked out his art salvation with the aid of his extraordinary genius.

Nowhere but in Venice can any idea be formed of how great this genius was, and if we study his work at the Accademia, in the Doge's Palace, in most of the churches, and above all in the 'Scuola di S. Rocco,' we are bound to give him the place in art which has so frequently been assigned to Titian.

It was no vain boast of his that he would combine the colour of Titian and the drawing of Michelangelo; and he might have added the chiaroscuro of Correggio. His 'Marriage at Cana,' in the sacristy of the Salute, shows us that, when it suited his purpose, he not only had the chiaroscuro of Correggio, but could deal with the subtle mysteries of light and shade of Rembrandt. He knew the limitations of his art, and never attempted to transgress them; but within those limitations, he had at his command all that is needed to produce great art. That he does not always give us the pleasure which we derive from some of the earlier work is no detraction from it. We cannot always live in the high altitudes to which he conducts us, and we may go from S. Rocco to the Giovanelli Giorgione and prove those pleasures

'That hills and valleys, dale and field  
And all the craggy mountains yield.'

Such pleasures as we derive from a beautiful 'pastoral' after straining our minds to follow Milton in his flights to the *Paradise Regained*.

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Space does not allow us to go through the list of works which Tintoret left behind him. I have never been to Venice without finding some new work of his, and if at first sight they hardly appear up to his high standard, it is often owing to culpable neglect, or to shocking restoration.

If the school of painting developed somewhat later in Venice than in Umbria or Tuscany, it showed much greater vitality, for where else in Italy can we find during the latter part of the sixteenth century anything to compare with the work of Tintoret? Art flagged for a while after that, and seemed as if it would disappear, as it was fast doing in the central provinces of Italy. We must wait till the eighteenth century, when Venice produced another genius to carry on the traditions of the sixteenth.

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo was born in 1693, nearly a century after Tintoret had gone to his rest. A mind cast in a lesser mould than that of his great predecessor, but an amazingly dexterous craftsman. His faults may be attributed to the times in which he lived, and, be that as it may, Venice was the only city in Italy that could still boast of a consummate painter. We should all have been the losers if his contemporary, Canaletto, had not made us familiar with the Venice of his day; and Guardi in his work added artistic qualities to the knowledge shown in the work of his master. Pietro Longhi, with a fascinating dexterity, gives us the foibles of the age in which he lived. He tells us in a language understood by all, what Goldoni tells us more fully, but only as a reward for a long study of the Venetian

SIENA: A TOWN ON A HILL









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dialect. When everywhere in Italy men's periwigs seemed of greater importance than the brains they covered, Venice could still boast of two men of true genius—Goldoni the dramatist and Tiepolo the painter. It seemed a last flicker before Napoleon's answer to the Venetian envoys : 'Sarò un Attila per la Repubblica.'





## PART II

### HILL TOWNS OF TUSCANY

‘Cara e beata e benedetta Toscana patria d’ogni eleganza e d’ogni gentil costume, e sede eterna di civiltà.’—LEOPARDI.



## CHAPTER IX

### SIENA, ITS DUOMO AND BAPTISTERY

*'Siena opens to thee her heart more widely than her gate.'*

SHOULD we enter Siena by the Strada Fiorentina, we shall be stopped at the Camollia Gate by customs officials, who will peer under the driver's seat to satisfy themselves that no country produce is being smuggled. This gives us an opportunity to study the old gate, and, if so inclined, to note down the letters which are cut on each stone forming the arch. CORMAGISTIBISENAPANDIT, they run; and if we are fond of puzzles and have some Latinity left us, we may arrive at spacing these letters into words, and get: Cor Magis Tibi Sena Pandit. Add to this a word or two which we may take as being understood, and we get the text at the head of this chapter. I spent the three summer months of last year in Siena, and I hope it may be my good fortune to spend a good many more there. Not only is there a wealth of material for a painter, pictures and sculpture for his delectation and entire quarters of the city still existing to carry him back to the most stirring times in Italy's history, but also a people amongst whom it is a pleasure to dwell, and whose manners and bearing to a stranger do not belie the motto over the Camollia Gate.

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Contrary to my custom, I did not go to an Italian albergo, but to a pension frequented by English and Americans. It had been very highly recommended, and its position is in a high part of the town, commanding a fine view of the hill crowned by the great cathedral. I had no reason to regret my choice, and if it pleases God that I again go to Siena, I hope I may still find the Pensione S. Caterina kept by the same obliging people. For while I heard that the towns in the plains were unbearably hot and stuffy, it was easy to keep cool in Siena; and those who have visited it in the winter or early spring remember nothing, as a rule, more clearly than the bitter, cold winds. The latter part of the spring and the autumn are, of course, the ideal seasons; but as these months suit most places in Italy, Siena may well be reserved for the summer. The view from my bedroom window was nearly the same as that of the illustration. On first arriving it was too late in the day to cross the valley, much as I longed, to explore the mass of houses covering the farther hill, and to find my way to the Duomo, stranded on the tops of the houses. Besides, the table-d'hôte bell summoned us to the dining-room. From thirty to forty ladies were assembled there, and I looked in vain for another man to keep me in countenance. The name Santa Caterina suggested a nunnery, and I wondered whether I had not got into one by mistake. On being allotted my place, I fancied I saw a slight movement of an eyelid of my next neighbour and an answering smile across the table. But as I was told at a later period that we men (there was a second one at that time) were all so conceited that we fancied women



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could not get on without our company, it is therefore possible that the wink and the smile only existed in an imagination fed by this masculine vanity. We may return to our fellow-boarders later on; at present Siena absorbs most of our thoughts.

In the little hanging garden of the pension it was pleasant to sit out in the cool of the evening, and watch the after-glow deepen on the mass of houses and the cathedral which buried the opposite hill.

The simple breakfast was served under a pergola in the garden, '*pei signori chi lo preferiscono fuori*,' as I was informed in a perfect Tuscan accent by a maid who might have posed to Sodoma for a Madonna. It was such a dry summer that I was only once obliged to take this meal indoors.

I traced my way on a map to the Duomo, and was off before I saw any signs of the thirty to forty ladies who filled the pension.

Some steep and narrow streets lead into the valley, and others, if anything rather steeper, lead up the hill to the Duomo. Approaching it from the southern end of the Piazza, one is amazed to see how ornate a building it is. But after looking at the frontage for some time, doubts are liable to arise as to whether the immense amount of elaboration be commensurate with the effect produced. The old Sienese had certainly spared neither pains nor money to raise a fane to the Madonna, to whom their city is dedicated.

My contemplations were suddenly disturbed by an elderly little man asking if he might show me round. I did not need him, as I had three months before me to

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find out all I wanted concerning the cathedral ; but he had such a piteous and yet comic look that my moral courage to dismiss him failed me. While describing the contents of the Duomo, his flow of language and gestures often reached the sublime just before toppling over into the ridiculous. Like some poor men (and I learnt afterwards that he was very poor), he seemed to derive a pleasure from rolling out of his mouth large sums of money and talking of millionaires. Mr. Pierpont Morgan was his favourite example, and his ‘il Pierreponto Morgano’ sounded richly, like the name of some mediæval condottiere. ‘Behold that exquisitely sculptured holy-water stoup, *il capolavoro* of Federighi, the which “il Pierreponto” tried to rob us of with an offer of a million lire. Bah!’ with a wave of indignation, ‘could millions make amends to us for the loss of so supreme a work of art?’ This was amusing at first, but after a while I studied how I could best shake the man off with the least hurt to his feelings. I pulled out my sketch-book, and told him I wished to make a drawing of some object just then catching the rays of the sun. I gave him his fee, telling him that we should probably meet again. I was so prepared to have the fee disputed—as I had lately spent a long while in Egypt—that I was startled at his excess of gratitude. He kissed my hand, and then placing his own on his heart, he gave me a bow which no stage dancing-master could have equalled. He then vanished like the ghost who was asked for a subscription. So much has been written about every place of note and published in a handy form that these poor old guides must find it hard to make a living.

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Siena Cathedral contains more beautiful things than most churches in Italy, but both the interior as well as its façade are so overladen with ornament that one longs for a spot where the eye can rest. But what a delightful place it is to visit over and over again, for each time some beautiful object, unnoticed before, will attract your attention. How far Niccoló Pisano was responsible for the main structure is not stated, but the façade of the west end is the work of his son Giovanni. Niccoló designed the pulpit and completed it with the help of his son and pupils, the stairs now existing dating three centuries later. It is one of the great achievements of thirteenth-century Gothic. The Sienese employed all the best sculptors of Central Italy to beautify their cathedral, and in the following century they produced one of their own, who was *facile princeps* till the advent of the Florentine, Donatello.

Jacopo della Quercia was born in 1374, twelve years before Donatello. He is less known than he deserves, from his work being mostly confined to his native city. But, singularly enough, there is only one specimen of his work in the Duomo itself, and even that is only 'attributed' to him. It is the beautiful font in the chapel of St. John. But we shall come back to Della Quercia when we descend to the church of St. John, which forms the crypt to the choir of the cathedral. The chapel of St. John—not to be confused with the latter church—is, to my thinking, the most beautiful spot in this richly furnished cathedral.

Besides the font, ascribed to Della Quercia, there is a masterpiece of Donatello's over the altar : the bronze



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statue of St. John the Baptist, very similar to the wooden statue by the same artist in the Frari at Venice. There is also a St. Catherine by Neroccio, and a St. Ansanus by Giovanni di Stefano. It is not alone for the sculpture we visit this chapel, the gift of the Aringhiere family ; the wall decoration is designed by Peruzzi to set off five small frescoes by Pinturicchio. One represents the kneeling figure of Alberto Aringhiere, an elderly knight of Rhodes, with the island of Rhodes in the background ; and a second one, also a kneeling figure, is a portrait of a son of the former. The elder man is as well drawn and as dignified as if Bellini had painted it, and the backgrounds in both cases are very suggestive of Raphael. The other panels are of subjects connected with the Baptist, but hardly equal to the portraits of the donors. A beautiful portal encloses the chapel, which for catchpenny reasons is generally closed.

Near here, in the left transept, are two statues which would be of great interest if we had any confidence that they were portraits of those whom they represent. The one is of Enea Silvio Piccolomini as Pope Pius II., and the other of his nephew and successor to the Papal throne. As both these Popes were Sienese, and their family name is intimately connected with Siena, a few words concerning them may not be out of place.

Enea Silvio Piccolomini was born in 1405 at Corsignano, a small village on the southern confines of the Sienese Republic, a village we shall refer to later on. He was of a noble family, but it is not till his day that



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its name had great prominence in the annals of the republic. While Enea was a student at the University of Siena, a Franciscan friar, San Bernardino, was moving from town to town in Italy calling the people to repentance; and during a visit to the city of his adoption, crowds flocked to listen to his eloquence. Amongst these was Enea, the young student, and then a rising poet. A document exists written by him in which he says: 'He moved me so much that I, too, very nearly entered his order.' To study his further career we will step into the famous library, which is entered from the left aisle. It was formerly known as the Sala Piccolominea, and was erected by Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini, afterwards Pope Pius III., to perpetuate the memory of his famous uncle. Between the years 1505 and 1507 Pinturicchio adorned the walls with his ten celebrated frescoes.

In the first of the series we see young Enea, mounted on a white horse, in the train of Cardinal Capranica, who had made him his secretary. They are on their way to the Council of Basle. It is a fine composition, though rather spoilt by an impossible sky.

In the second fresco we find Enea in Edinburgh, in the presence of James I. of Scotland. We are told that, having pleaded the cause of Cardinal Capranica with such success at Basle, he was deputed by the Pope to sail to Scotland to try and induce its king to declare war on Henry VI. of England, with the object of preventing that monarch from disturbing the continental peace which had been concluded at Arras.

An interesting episode connected with this journey

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to Scotland was given me by Professor Peck, an American scholar who was searching the Archives to gather all the information he could find relating to Pius II. In the winter of 1435 Enea reached the coast of Scotland after a very stormy voyage, and in spite of being so near his destination, the weather was such as to make any chance of landing seem hopeless. Enea records that he made a solemn vow to the Virgin that if he could be safely landed, he would tramp barefoot to the nearest shrine erected in her honour and there offer up his thanks. His prayer was answered, for he states that he was cast on to the rocks of this inhospitable coast ; but on inquiring of the natives how far he was from the nearest shrine, he heard to his dismay that there was none nearer than ten miles. He then describes this awful journey, which he made barefoot when the snow lay deep on the ground, and in a wild and desolate country. He ends by saying : ‘ Even now, in my old age, I have not lost the ill effects of that tramp, for I yet suffer from rheumatism in both my feet.’

In the third fresco our hero is being crowned poet laureate by the Emperor Frederick III., Enea having been sent to him on a mission from the Antipope, Felix v. The astute diplomatist soon perceived that he had espoused the wrong cause, and in the following fresco we find him kissing the foot of the legitimate Pope, Eugenius iv. In the interval between this scene and the next Enea must have taken priest’s orders and received rapid preferment, for in the fifth scene he is depicted as Bishop of Trieste, and has con-

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ducted a mission very nearly concerning the Emperor Frederick III. He had been sent by that monarch to the court of Naples to sue, on behalf of his master, for the hand of Princess Eleanor of Portugal. The scene depicts the meeting of the royal couple, and our hero, in bishop's cope and mitre, is the introducer. This took place just outside the Camollia Gate, and a column still stands there to commemorate the event.

We next see him receiving a cardinal's hat from Calixtus III. ; and in the seventh tableau he is raised to the Papal dignity under the title of Pius II. His first important act as Supreme Pontiff is given us in the eighth fresco, where he presides at the Congress of Mantua in order to promote another crusade, which, however, did not meet with the success of his former missions.

We have in the following an event touching the Sienese more nearly, and that is the canonisation of Caterina Benincasa, known ever since as St. Catherine of Siena. In the final scene Pius II. is at Ancona to encourage by his presence the crusaders, who were to assemble at that port on their way to the Holy Land. He died, however, before the arrival of the Venetian fleet. His health had broken down before he took this journey to Ancona, and his death ensued on the 16th of August 1464.

Mr. Edmund G. Gardner, in *The Story of Siena*, published by Messrs. Dent & Co., gives a fuller account of the events depicted by Pinturicchio ; and for further information concerning Enea Piccolomini, see Dean Kitchin's *Pope Pius II.*



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Apart from their artistic value, these frescoes are of the greatest interest to the historian of that period ; they contain many portraits of eminent people, and owing to the copious diary of Pius II., it is possible to place a number of the characters. Raphael was amongst Pinturicchio's assistants, and his youthful figure appears in many of the scenes. Some contend that Raphael actually designed some of them, but this seems hardly probable, he being at that time a youth of one-and-twenty ; while Pinturicchio was an established master, and some thirty years older than his assistant. There being a good deal of Raphaelesque treatment, inclines me to the opinion that Raphael was more influenced by the older man in his subsequent work than ever Pinturicchio was by his pupil. The Borgio apartments in the Vatican more worthily represent the art of Pinturicchio, yet there is no gainsaying that the Libreria of the Duomo is a great achievement.

Enea Silvio Piccolomini did not forget Siena nor Corsignano, the village where he was born. He raised the former to an archbishopric, and for more than a century after his death it was always held by a member of his family. His nephew, Francesco Piccolomini, became Cardinal Archbishop of the See in 1460, and held it for over forty years ; he died a month after he had become Pope under the name of Pius III. Never expecting to be raised to this dignity, he prepared his own tomb under the fourth altar in the left aisle, and on the steps of which we read : ' Francesco, Cardinal of Siena, whilst still living had this sepulchre made for himself.' We find his name again on the arch over



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the altar : ‘ Francesco Piccolomini, Cardinal of Siena, nephew of the Supreme Pontiff, Pius II.’

We get an appreciation of both from recorded sayings of their contemporaries. On the election of the successor to Calixtus III. a rival candidate asked : ‘ Shall we raise a poet to the Chair of St. Peter and let the Church be governed on pagan principles ? ’ And after the election of Pius III. the general of the Camaldusian Order wrote : ‘ God be thanked that the government of the Church has been entrusted to such a man, who is so manifestly a storehouse of all virtues, and the abode of the Holy Spirit of God. Under his care the Lord’s vineyard will no more bring forth thorns and thistles, but will stretch out its fruitful branches to the ends of the earth.’

Ambitious rivalry may somewhat account for the first estimate, and the relief felt when a man of Christian piety had succeeded the infamous Alexander VI. may well account for the latter.

There are four distinguished statues of saints by Michael Angelo in the niches above the Piccolomini altar. On our way to the choir we must not overlook a bronze relief by Donatello let into the pavement in front of a chapel to the left. The High Altar in the choir is from the designs of the great Sienese architect, painter and sculptor, Baldassare Peruzzi. The bronze canopy, the candelabra, the stalls and the rood-loft, are all the work of distinguished artists of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

What incites the admiration of visitors perhaps more than anything else is the celebrated pavement.

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Now, I can't perceive any stupider form of pavement than one which is not suitable to walk on. The original one doubtless served its purpose until the designs on it were nearly worn out ; the stones were then stored in a museum, and a new pavement, with the former designs, was substituted. Part of the latter is roped off so that you may look at it from a safe distance, and the remainder is covered with a loose boarded floor, thus giving us a pavement we can neither walk on nor see. This false floor is removed for a few days at the feast of the Assumption, when Siena is crowded with country-folk who come to see the Palio. The crowd is then so dense that the pavement might as well have been covered for all one can see of it. Every guide-book gives the details and describes the subjects, so we need not enlarge on it here.

Leaving the cathedral by the south door at the angle of the nave and transept, we see the skeleton of a huge construction in an alignment with the transepts. This is as far as the builders got in 1339 with the proposed new plan of their Duomo. It was to have been the nave ; and the existing one would then have served as a transept, the present north transept being converted into the choir. The ambition of the Sienese to have the largest cathedral in existence was never realised. The terrible plague, known as the Black Death, raged for six months in Siena during 1348 and carried off three-quarters of the population, and at its termination neither the means nor the desire existed to carry on the work of the projected enlargements.

THE BAPTISTERY OF S. GIOVANNI









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The present façade had not been completed when it was proposed to add the new nave, and, in course of time, this was taken up again and finished in 1380.

The Gothic of Central and Southern Italy is seldom very satisfactory to northern eyes ; but on seeing the façade a second time, with the afternoon sun playing amidst that mass of sculptured marble, I had to readjust my first opinions.

We pass through a high arch, destined for one of the supports of the projected nave, and a long flight of steps takes us down to a square in front of the east end of the cathedral. On this square faces the lower church, S. Giovanni Battista, which forms the crypt, as it were, of the chancel of the Duomo. It has a fine but incomplete Gothic frontage, and its interior is perhaps the most beautiful thing in Siena. Its great feature is the baptismal font, surmounted by a tabernacle to hold the holy oil. It was designed by Della Quercia, and the marble was sculptured by him and his pupils. One of the six gilt bronze reliefs covering the sides of the font is also the work of the great Siennese sculptor ; and though two of the others are by Lorenzo Ghiberti and one by Donatello, Della Quercia's work holds its own with, if it does not surpass, that of his Florentine rivals. Turino di Sano and his son Giovanni, also Siennese sculptors, are the authors of the two remaining ones, and their work does not suffer much from being in such exalted surroundings. A niche with a bronze figure of one of the Virtues separates each relief. Faith and Hope are the work of Donatello, and in these

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statuettes the Florentine's work surpasses that of his Sienese competitors. The bronze cherubs on the tabernacle are also by Donatello.

A glorious background sets off the font. In the vaulting above the altar we can just discern, in the dim light, three scenes from the Passion of our Lord, and two flights of angels carry the eye up the sanctuary arch to the keystone which is hid beneath the heavenly throne. The whole ceiling is covered with fifteenth-century frescoes, and were they not the work of Sienese artists we should imagine they belonged to an earlier period. The old traditions remained longer with the Sienese painters than with any others in Italy, and it is not till the Milanese, Il Sodoma, came amongst them that one realises how late they were in being influenced by the Renaissance.

The drawing I made of the font kept me in this church a good many mornings. The font still serves its original purpose, and not a day went by but one or two babies were brought here to be baptised. My intention was to introduce a christening party into my picture, but I finally decided that even without that it was getting overloaded with detail.

The *balia*, or nurse, still retains a special costume, which varies according to the district she comes from. It is a pretty sight to see her holding the *bambino* over the font while the priest sprinkles the holy water.

I made the acquaintance of the *paroco*, as the parish priest is called ; for although S. Giovanni forms part of the cathedral structure, it is, nevertheless, a parish church by itself. Don Nazareno Orlandi is



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a cultured and wide-minded ecclesiastic, to whom I am indebted for much useful information. The subject may have taxed my patience at times, but it was a lovely spot in which to spend many hours.

## CHAPTER X

### THE CAMPO AND THE COMMUNAL PALACE

‘The old Palace of the Commonwealth stood serene in the morning light, and its Gothic windows gazed tranquilly upon the shallow cup before it, as empty now of the furious passions, the mediæval hates and rivalries and ambitions, as of the other volcanic fires which are said to have burned there.’—W. D. HOWELLS, *Tuscan Cities*.

IN the valley, immediately below my window, the little belfry of St. Catherine’s chapel rises from a mass of brown-red tiles, which cover her house and those of the tanners, who ever since her time have here been engaged in that trade. The Via Benincasa, so called after the family name of the saint, runs past her house, and ascends to the higher ground connecting the hill we are on with the one we see crowned by the cathedral. An odour of tan rather than of sanctity hangs about this street, and is only partly lost when the higher ground is reached. What may be the name of the parish in this hollow I can’t say, and probably few Sienese could either. But every one is aware that the tanners’ quarter is in the *Nobile Contrada dell’ Oca*,—that is, the noble ward of the Goose. No reflection this on the wisdom of Siena’s beloved saint; any more than the *Contrada della Chiocciola* suggests a snail-like movement in those who dwell in that district away on the farther hill. And the seventeen

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contrade into which Siena is divided are each represented by some beast or insect without reference to the characteristics of their inhabitants.

I was hardly an hour in Siena before I heard a dispute as to whether our pension was in the 'Goose' or in the 'Dragon'; the landlady was called in to decide, and she informed us that the two houses which had been knocked into one were each in a different contrada, the one overlooking the valley forming a part of the 'Goose,' while the front and entrance of the pension were in the 'Dragon.' This seemed very puzzling, and even more so when I noticed that the boarders who had rooms in the 'Goose' fancied themselves rather more than those relegated to the 'Dragon.' I was enlightened when I heard that the *Contrada dell' Oca* had carried off the prize more often than had *il Drago* in the former races for the 'Palio'; and as this important event was to take place within a fortnight, there was some accounting for the interest displayed. As we shall devote a chapter to this later on, we shall confine ourselves at present to one of the three divisions of the city, originating from the nature of the ground on which it stands. The 'Terzo di Città' comprises the hill dominated by the cathedral; the 'Terzo di S. Martino' the one on which stands the church of that name; and the 'Terzo di Camollia' is on the long ridge running from the gate of that name till its junction with the two other hills. The configuration of the city is roughly that of a three-pointed star, its centre being the great square now called officially 'Piazza Vittorio Emanuele,' but usually known as the 'Campo.' It is there we

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now direct our steps. Its whereabouts can be detected from most parts of the city by the 'Torre del Mangia,' that grand mediæval tower which springs up from the communal buildings.

We skirt the edge of the hollow, as in the case of going to the cathedral, by descending one street and ascending another, for a level street is, in Siena, only a comparative term. On reaching the Via Cavour, the Regent Street of the city, the first great palace we see is that of the Salimbene, a leading Ghibelline family, whose fortune rose and fell according to the faction in the ascendant. A little farther along the street is that of the Tolomei, the leaders of the Guelf party, and it is still occupied by a member of that family. As the Ghibellines were usually in the ascendant, and showed little mercy to those of the other faction, it is astonishing to find that this grim palace is still owned by a Count Tolomei. Twice burnt down by the populace and twice rebuilt, it looks as if it defied time, and as if nothing but modern artillery could make any impression on its solid walls.

We find that the Tolomei could also take up the people's cause when it suited their purpose, and in the early part of the fourteenth century we find them in alliance with the notaries and butchers, as well as many of the artisan class, to fight the Noveschi, or adherents of the Nine, who then ruled the city. The Nine were elected from the burgher class to the exclusion of the nobility, as well as of the *populo minuto*. When the Tolomei were suppressed by the Noveschi a short peace ensued, till it was again disturbed by renewed fights



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between them and the Salimbene. And these were by no means the only great houses who had family feuds, for we are told that the Malvolti and Piccolomini fought out their differences in the streets and from the towers of their palaces. The Saracini and the Scotti likewise enlivened Siena, till the plague of 1348 devastated the city. Yet in spite of these feuds Siena was never more flourishing than in the half-century preceding the plague. Her population is estimated to have been one hundred thousand, and the great structures dating from that period testify to the wealth at her disposal.

The 'Croce del Travaglio,' a hundred yards or so beyond the Tolomei palace, is the point where the three main streets meet—the Via Cavour being the chief artery of the 'Camollia Terzo,' the Via di Città that of the 'Terzo' of that name, and the Via Ricasoli traversing the 'Terzo di S. Martino.' It is still the busiest part of the city, and it was here that the partisans of the different houses often met to fight their battles in the Campo just below.

A beautiful loggia stands near the junction of the three roads. It faces the Via di Città and backs on to the great square. Built in 1417, somewhat in imitation of the 'Loggia dei Lanzi' at Florence, it was the seat of a commercial tribunal, and remains a witness that Siena had to some extent recovered from the terrible effects of the plague. It is a handsome Gothic building, with the influence of the Early Renaissance just felt in the upper part and in some of the ornamentation. The figures, niched on the four supporting piers, are very fine, especially one of S. Victor, by Federighi, which

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we may almost compare with the S. George of Donatello at Or S. Michele in Florence.

To the right and left of this building some steps take us down to the Campo; and with the exception of S. Mark's Square at Venice, I know no open place in all Italy which impressed me as much. I was prepared for a good deal, for the Mangia Tower, seen from our pension, had raised my expectations. But, seen from below, the eye is carried with a rush up the plain brick shaft till it meets the stone belfry, sharp cut and white against the blue. Its proportions are so fine, and it shows its purpose—that of a belfry and watch-tower—so clearly and simply, that no ornamentation seems needed to adorn its beauty. It rises from the angle of the left wing of the 'Palazzo Pubblico,' or, to give it its more correct name, 'Il Palazzo dei Signori della Repubblica'—an ideal example of a mediæval municipal building. The central portion is four stories high, and the two wings rise to three, but only rose to the height of two stories before the seventeenth-century additions. The doors and windows are thirteenth-century pointed Gothic, the mullions of the upper windows being replaced by elegant white marble pillars. A peculiarity is that the wings are set at a slight angle to the main building, and this alignment being continued by the houses at that end of the Campo, forms a slight inward curve which, with a semicircle of tall palaces, enclose the Piazza.

A word is lacking in our language which properly gives the Italian *piazza* or its French equivalent, *place*. It seems absurd to speak of this semicircular space as a

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‘square,’ and we don’t get out of the difficulty by calling it the market-place, the market not being held there but in the square behind the municipal buildings.

The plan of this *piazza* (for I can’t find another suitable word) is quite unique, being a semicircle cut by a slightly incurved diameter. The level of the enclosed space is lower at the centre of the diameter, forming a shallow amphitheatre. A broad stone pavement runs right round the space, the central part being paved in brick with lines of a light-coloured stone radiating from a point in front of the municipal buildings. This spacious amphitheatre is likened to the inside of an oyster shell, and, as if a pearl seemed necessary to complete it, we find it in the beautiful Loggia built at the foot of the tower. ‘La Cappella di Piazza’ was begun after the cessation of the great plague of 1348 : it is a Gothic chapel, designed as an open Loggia, supported by four piers, and butting, regardless of the windows, against the left wing of the municipal palace. A century later, Federighi added the Renaissance top, the two styles merging one into the other without any sense of discordance. The Gothic statues remaining in the niches suggest, unhappily, that the plague must have carried off the earlier Sienese sculptors, and that Siena was not then prosperous enough to attract others from elsewhere. Before Federighi added the upper part to the Loggia a new school had arisen in Siena, and it is to be regretted that the niches had been filled by inferior workmen.

Della Quercia was no more, but he had left his mark on the Campo by a work even greater than his



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baptismal font at S. Giovanni. This was not only the pearl of the oyster shell, but the most notable piece of sculpture in Siena. What we see now is a beautiful fountain, for Della Quercia's plan and design are still there ; but to find the refinement, and the strong personal note of his sculpture, we must enter the Palazza Pubblico and look at the broken remains of his original work which are stored there at present. A modern lifeless copy is what we now see. It has beauty even as it is, but it is that of a death-mask taken from one infinitely more beautiful.

A fountain was here a century before Della Quercia enclosed it in his marble setting, and the name given to it, 'Fonte Gaia,' is that by which it is still known. It was so called from the general rejoicings at the advent of its waters. Mr. Edmund Gardner gives us some interesting extracts from Giuseppe Porri's *Miscellanea Storica Senese*. 'There was such rejoicing in Siena, such dancing and such illumination,' writes the old chronicler, 'that it would seem incredible if it were told, nor could any one believe it who had not seen it.' A fine statue of Venus, said to have been signed by Lysippus, was discovered soon after the completion of the work, and the Sienese, mad with delight, carried it to the Campo and enthroned it on their fountain. We are told that the artists rushed to worship this divine relic of antiquity—'*questa tanta maraviglia e tanta arte.*'

But things went badly with the Republic ; faction riots increased, and Divine wrath seemed clearly indicated when the city was devastated by the plague.



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When the rule of the 'Twelve' a few years later had substituted the rule of the 'Nine' (the Noveschi), the Venus was torn from the throne which the Mother of God should have occupied, and being presumably the cause of the evils the city had endured, she was smashed up and buried in Florentine territory. This last touch is delightful, for when the Sienese were not fighting amongst themselves, it was to make common cause against the hereditary enemy, Florence. A century had now elapsed since their great victory at Montaperto, when in Dante's immortal phrase 'the havoc and the great slaughter dyed the Arbia red'; and the Florentines had more than once avenged their defeat. We may be sure that no Florentines were looking when the remains of the ill-fated Venus were placed beneath her soil.

When it was decided to place a worthy statue of the Madonna where Venus had been enthroned, they were fortunate in having such an artist as Jacopo della Quercia to undertake the work.

Let us cross the Campo to enter the municipal buildings. As we near the Loggia at the foot of the tower we see the remains of the fresco with which Sodoma adorned its interior. It is said to have been one of his masterpieces—one more instance of the innumerable works of art lost to us from the perishable nature of fresco painting.

A great disk, centring the top story of the main building, commemorates a sermon preached by San Bernardino from the chapel in the Loggia, to an immense crowd gathered in the Campo. A contem-

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porary states that 'he converted and changed the minds and spirits of men marvellously, a wondrous power he had in persuading men to lay aside their mortal hatreds.' The letters I.H.S. in the centre of a disk may be seen to this day on houses in every street in Siena, testifying in each case to the influence of this Franciscan friar. Gambling was one of the vices he denounced, and the makers of dice were being reduced to beggary. On one of them complaining to the preacher of the ruin of his trade, Bernardino bade him make tablets with the sacred letters on them, and these were rapidly bought and placed on the houses of those who were influenced by the saint. The different towns visited by him can mostly be traced by the existence of such tablets. It was one of these sermons that changed the whole course of Enea Silvio Piccolomini's life, as we mentioned further back in speaking about Pius II.

At the corner furthest from the tower stands a granite column surrounded by a gilded bronze she-wolf, suckling the twins Romulus and Remus. It is a beautiful example of many similar columns in Siena and in the smaller towns which formed part of the Republic, and is the work of Giovanni Turini, a contemporary of Della Quercia. It is as much the emblem of the Republic of Siena as the winged lion is that of Venice. As this book is chiefly concerned with a long stay in both those territories, I have made use of the wolf and of the winged lion to decorate its cover.

Tradition has it that Siena was founded by Senus, a son of Romulus, and that he used the Roman she-wolf and twins as the emblem of his colony.

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The *balzana*, the black and white shield of the Commune, is over every door and window of the building. We can also see the lion, the shield of the people; and in the very centre of the palace, a huge shield, with the Medici pills and surmounted by the grand ducal crown, marks the time when Duke Cosimo ended the Republic. What we see above the entrance was evidently placed there when the people were the ruling power: two she-wolves, showing in their attitudes as much respect as wolfish nature admits, stand on each side of the crowned lion of the people.

The large room on the first floor, called the 'Sala del Mappomondo,' or 'Sala della Balestre,' is now used as a law-court, and where but in Italy could one conceive a court holding a sitting in such a majestic room? and even in Italy I know of none as impressive and full of interest as this one. A huge fresco by Simone Martini, dating 1315, occupies the whole wall which faces us when we enter. What a background for a bench of magistrates! The Virgin enthroned holds the Infant Christ on her knee, who with raised hand blesses the deliberations of the council. Our Lady is represented as the Queen of Siena; apostles and prophets hold up the canopy under which she sits, and saints, martyrs, and angels crowd around the central group. Time has not dealt too harshly with the fresco; the colour in parts is rich in the extreme, and intense religious sentiment pervades the whole composition.

On the wall opposite this great work is a second Simone Martini, painted some ten years later. The



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subject is a mediæval warrior riding towards a walled city. It is a portrait of Simone's contemporary, Guidoriccio dei Fogliani, Captain of the Sienese forces during the wars with Castruccio. He appears to have been successful in all the battles which Siena was perpetually fighting with the neighbouring little republics, and amongst the rewards which the grateful city showered on him, none could have exceeded that of being immortalised in so glorious a manner. It is not as ripe an art as that of Carpaccio ; but it is as sound, and the dignity of this warrior advancing alone to summon the besieged town to surrender, makes one instinctively think of the St. George and the Dragon in the Carpaccio Chapel at Venice.

Two large battle pieces, on the wall opposite the windows, are decorative, and are interesting also in showing how stationary the art of Siena was. More than a century had elapsed between the painting of the two frescoes, and it is difficult to say at once which is of the fourteenth century and which of the fifteenth. For the history of these battles and a detailed description of the frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico, see Mr. Gardner's *Story of Siena*.

An archaic Madonna by Guido da Siena is hung beneath the Guidoriccio fresco ; and on each side, quite regardless of the general decoration of the room, are two saints faultlessly drawn by Sodoma. The sudden break with the early traditions of the Sienese school of painting is in this case upsetting. Beautiful as these two Sodomas are, we had rather see them in surroundings more in keeping with his school. There is another by the same artist, of S. Bernardo, also very beautiful ; but



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the three standing in very realistically painted Renaissance niches jar with the general scheme of the room. The San Bernardino by Sano di Pietro, and the St. Catherine by Vecchietta, though both painted by Sodoma's contemporaries and by less gifted artists than he was, seem less out of keeping with their surroundings.

Leading out of this room is the 'Sala dei Nove,' where the Council of Nine met during the period of Siena's greatness. It is now known as the 'Sala della Pace,' from the figure of Peace in the great work of Ambrogio Lorenzetti. This great artist was commissioned to decorate the entire hall in 1337, and in spite of the ravages of time and of several restorations, they still show that Lorenzetti was an artist worthy of the age of Dante, and comparable with his great contemporaries Giotto and Duccio di Buonensegna. The idea underlying the whole series is summed up in the text we see above the enthroned figure of Justice:—  
'Love righteousness, ye that be the judges of the earth.'

One fresco depicts the horrors of Evil Government, with special reference to its ill effects on Siena. The demon of Fear hovers at the gate of the city, given over to murder and outrage, and on a scroll we see:—  
'Through selfish ambition in this city has Justice been subjected to Tyranny; wherefore by this way no one passes without dread of death: for without and within the gates they plunder.'

We leave this hall with the regret that time has not dealt more gently with Ambrogio Lorenzetti's work, and proceed to the chapel of the Palace. This, with

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the exception of the altar and the organ, is entirely the work of the quattrocento. Taddeo di Bartolo covered the walls and roof with his frescoes in the early part of the century. A man of a lesser stamp than Lorenzetti or Simone di Martino, Taddeo gives us, nevertheless, a noble decoration. The famous choir stalls by Domenico di Niccolo, the holy-water stoup by Giovanni di Turino, and the iron railing, dividing the chapel from the ante-chapel, by Giacomo di Giovanni, are all of the best work of that great period.

The altar-piece not only takes us into the following century, but far away from what we know as the Sienese school.

Giovanni Bazzi, known as 'Il Sodoma,' came to Siena in 1501, and although the city is the richer by many of his masterpieces, his advent was the deathblow to the Sienese religious school of painting. He was only twenty-four years old, but equipped with a great knowledge of the human form, acquired in his native Milan, under Leonardo da Vinci, and also endowed with a still greater sense of physical beauty; these qualities seem to have dissatisfied the younger generation of Sienese painters with the more archaic art of their school. After Sodoma, Sienese painting is hardly worth considering. The altar-piece here is one of his later works; it represents the Holy Family and St. Calixtus, relieved against a beautiful landscape background. Physical beauty can go no further, and yet we wish that an altar-piece of one of the earlier men had been the chief decoration of this beautiful chapel. The Sienese contemporary of Sodoma, Domenico Beccafumi, decorated

A STREET IN SIENA









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the 'Sala di Concistoró'; an artist extravagantly praised by Vasari, but showing the decline in Sienese art.

We get back to the early quattrocento in the 'Sala di Balià,' where we find the walls covered with frescoes illustrating scenes from the life of Siena's great Pope, Alexander III. They are entirely the work of Spinello Aretino, assisted by his son Parri.

Siena having always been more Ghibelline than Guelf in its partisanship, the humiliation of Barbarossa is not too much in evidence. But, Ghibelline as she was, she nevertheless sympathised with the Pope in his resistance to the aggressions of the Emperor. In 1185 her citizens closed their gates on Barbarossa, and later on they defeated his son Henry outside the Camollia Gate, and drove him discomfited out of their contada.

It is not fair to judge of the work of Spinello from these frescoes. We are told that he was over eighty when he began the work, and it is probable that a great deal of what we see is that of his son.

The naval battle is full of action, and is a fine bit of decoration. It may be asked what this naval battle may have to do with a hill city like Siena, or how it concerned Alexander III. It was in this way. The Pope had been driven away from Rome by the partisans of the Emperor, and, disguised as a friar, had taken refuge in Venice. The Doge, Sebastian Ziani, hearing what an illustrious personage was in his city, received him with due honours, and also sent ambassadors to intercede with Barbarossa on his behalf. This did not have the desired effect; for he of the red beard

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bade the Doge's envoys deliver the Pontiff into his hands, with the threat that if he did not do so 'the eagle would fly into S. Mark's, and that its foundations should be made as a ploughed field.' Ziani remained true to his guest, and he and all Venice prepared to defend themselves against the imperial forces. Thirty vessels were fitted out, and the old Doge commanded the fleet in person. Before it sailed, Mass was celebrated in St. Mark's by the Pontiff, who also presented the Doge with a sword he had blessed. The thirty Venetian ships were met by an imperial fleet of more than twice that number; but victory remained with the former, and Prince Otto, Barbarossa's son, was brought back a prisoner to Venice. The Pope and the citizens flocked to the Riva to welcome the victorious Doge, and when he stepped ashore the Pontiff drew a ring from his finger and, presenting it to Ziani, declared him Lord and Master of the Sea. The annual ceremony of Venice's marriage to the sea is said to date from that event, and it was continued till the arrival of Napoleon. Prince Otto was kept as a hostage, and Frederick Barbarossa was induced by his son to journey from Rome to Venice to reconcile himself with the Pope. The red slabs let in the pavement in the Atrium of St. Mark's identify the spot where the meeting of Pope and Emperor took place; and where, kneeling at the feet of the Pontiff, Frederick muttered the historic words: 'Non tibi sed Petro,' receiving the proud answer: 'et mihi et Petro.'

My excuse for this digression into Venetian history is the frequent allusions to these events in the paintings



## THE CAMPO AND COMMUNAL PALACE

in Italy. Several of them are depicted on these frescoes, but the absence of chronological order makes it confusing to follow the story.

A notable tragedy was enacted in this room in 1455, most graphically described by Mr. Gardner in his *Story of Siena*. As neither my knowledge nor space allows of my attempting to give a history of Siena, I will refer my readers to page 144 of Mr. Gardner's interesting book.

The 'Sala Monumentale' is entirely decorated by modern Sienese artists, the subjects being the leading incidents which brought about the unification of Italy. I confess to not having made a long stay in this hall, where recent events, treated in a realistic manner, are apt to jar on our eyes after the harmonious and decorative treatment of the earlier men. It is, nevertheless, very praiseworthy of the people of Siena to give this work to their fellow-citizens to do ; and unless similar commissions be given, how are they to discover if they have not a Puvis de Chavanne in their midst? To once more raise up a great school of art, Italy encourages those artists she has got, and from amongst their number she finds one, now and again, who amply rewards her for her patronage.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE PALIO OF SIENA

‘Destrier e corsiere  
Masnate e bandiere  
Coraccie e lamiere  
Vedrai rimutare.’

THE coming ‘Palio’ became more and more the talk of my fellow-boarders—if I may so call the thirty-five ladies—as we neared the date of the great event. Every Sunday after the festival of St. Catherine, the representatives of one of the contrade parade the streets in fifteenth-century costume, playing musical instruments—the drum *par excellence*—and going through wonderful evolutions with their banners. The *Comparsa della Contrada della Tartucca*—that is, the representation of the ward of the Tortoise—was out on parade during the first Sunday after my arrival. The contrada was easily localised by the banners with their emblem displayed at every street corner. The *Comparsa* having paraded its own district sallied forth into those of the enemy, where it was received in silence, except for a few criticisms as to the get-up of some of its members. They were a fine set of fellows, dressed in blue doublets, the sleeves slashed with yellow, and wearing particoloured hose; the *Capitano* was mounted and wearing a steel breastplate and helmet. Whenever they came to cross-roads they stopped to allow the *Alfieri* to do their banner-play. The flags

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are fixed on staves some ten feet long ; these they wave about, passing them under their legs, round their backs, high up over their heads, and finally lance them up a great height and catch them in their fall. The whole thing is done very gracefully, the movements of the two men keeping time.

Signs of the coming race were also visible in the Campo. The stone-paved roadway round the enclosure was being covered with a deep layer of sand, and staging was being fixed up in front of each house ; a palisade was also placed right round the centre of the Piazza, thus defining the racecourse.

Now comes the extraordinary side of the whole affair : not one of the contrade owns its horse, but they all share in the hiring of the total number about to compete, which is generally a dozen, as all the contrade do not run a horse in every race. Neither do the jockeys belong to the wards which employ them, but are countrymen who train more or less for the purpose, and are ignorant of the horse they will ride until three days before the event. They then assemble at the municipal palace, into the courtyard of which the horses are led on the morning of the first trial.

I went to the Campo that day to see and learn all I could ; also to take notes, as I wished, if possible, to make a drawing of some incident in the proceedings. At nine o'clock I found a dark mass of people stretching across the square, on the space of the shadow cast by the tower.

One by one the horses were led into the Campo and taken into the courtyard of the municipal palace, and, with one exception, they were greeted with jeers



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from the spectators. In the courtyard each beast had a number stamped on its crupper by the Sports Committee assembled there, after which a ballot took place to allot the riders to their mounts. The cavalcade presented a comical sight as it issued from the palace gate: the jockeys were in their shabbiest working clothes, with a pot helmet on their heads, and, with one exception, their steeds were of the cab-horse order. Not even good cab horses, for I was told that owners of good horses were disinclined to hire them out to race on such a dangerous course. From amongst the members of the committee one was pointed out to me as being Prince Borghese, the hero of the Pekin-Paris automobile race.

The horses were taken round the course so as to accustom the riders to their strange mounts, and to study the dangerous turnings. As they ride bare-backed, and a part of the course is downhill, with a sharp turn at the bottom, the danger is a real one, especially as there seem no restrictions in the manner in which the race is run.

Everybody in Siena is aware that, should the best horse fall to the lot of a poor district, a private auction takes place to get the best price from a wealthier one, to prevent that horse from winning. This auction begins at two o'clock that same day in the square of St. Augustine's church. It is therefore astonishing that the race should awaken so much interest. Should a prosperous ward have drawn a good horse, it takes care that the jockey is not bought over, and he virtually becomes a prisoner (although a well-cared-for one) till



## THE PALIO OF SIENA

the race is over. 'No sacred relic,' I was informed, 'is more venerated and more tenderly cared for than the horse during the interval, and if it wins it is almost worshipped.'

It has a bad time, nevertheless, during the race and the trials unless it gets clean away from the others ; for a heavy thong is used by each rider, as much to beat back his competitors as to hurry up his own mount, and this thong also accounts for the helmet of the jockey, he catching it as often as the beast he is on.

I hired a seat near the bottom of the hill at the sharp turning, which seat was also reserved to me for the trials. I took my materials with me to make a study for my picture ; but not being satisfied afterwards that I had chosen the most pictorial view, I decided to return to Siena for the second 'Palio,' which takes place on the 16th of August.

To lessen the danger at the turning as much as possible, a palisade of mattresses is fixed up to break the fall of an unhorsed rider, but one poor fellow who was thrown before he reached these buffers had to be carried off on a stretcher. It was evident at the trial who the winner would be, as the horse of the Caterpillar ward got well away from the others. I was surprised to notice that as soon as he had reached the winning-post he was surrounded by *carabinieri*, or mounted police, and seen by them safely off the Campo.

The 'Palio,' as the race itself is called, means the gorgeous banner which the winning contrada holds until it is won by another. The 2nd of July, the

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annual date of the first race, is begun by a celebration of the Mass at the altar in the Loggia at the foot of the tower. This is the only time when the wrought-iron railing is opened, and from daybreak you may find women kneeling on the flags of the chapel offering up prayers for their contrada. The Mass is at six o'clock, and when the old and rusty chapel bell is rung during the elevation of the Host, the crowd gathered in the Campo kneels down.

In the meanwhile the distinctive banners of every ward, and those of the Terzi of the city, are taken to the church of San Provenzano and grouped in the chancel, the 'Palio' itself being hung over the High Altar, on which every candle is alight. It seems strange to our ideas to see a church crowded with people of the humbler classes praying for good fortune in a coming race ; and stranger still if we go in the afternoon to one of the chapels, belonging especially to a contrada, and see the horse led in and solemnly sprinkled with holy water by the priest.

The chapel of the Dragon, in which I mentioned that a part of our pension was situated, is approached by a high flight of steps, making it difficult for the entrance of a horse ; an exception is therefore made in that instance, and the beast is allowed into the parish church. This is San Domenico, that huge structure which dominates the hill on which we lived. With a goodly number of the ladies of the S. Caterina, I went to witness this ceremony. The church was comparatively empty, for all except those who had reserved seats in the Campo were presumably hurrying

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down there. Shortly after our arrival the vast nave echoed with the clatter of the horse's hoofs on the pavement, and the beast was led up to the altar of S. Catherine, made famous by the frescoes of Sodoma. There being plenty of space, the two *Alfieri* went through the banner-play which ended by their lancing them up till they nearly struck the roof-timbers, and then gracefully catching them at the weighted ends of the staves. The priest next stepped down from the altar and sprinkled the horse, repeating in Latin the following prayer:—‘Let this animal receive Thy blessing, O Lord, whereby it may be preserved in body and freed from every harm, by the intercession of the blessed Anthony; through Christ our Lord. Amen.’ The *Comparsa* and the horse then left the church, to pay their respects to the Archbishop of Siena. We therefore hurried off to the archiepiscopal palace, which is on one side of the cathedral square. All who took part in the parade preceding the race met here, and each in turn filed before the palace, and went through the banner-play. The archbishop, a handsome, middle-aged man, saluted each one from a window balcony. It was a fine sight seen from the vantage of the cathedral steps, for the various *Comparsa* numbered in all over a hundred performers, and although some of them came from the poorest quarters, it is astonishing how fine a turnout they made. The horses, ridden by the *Capitani* of each, were fine-looking beasts, and very different from those about to take part in the race itself, and their riders had evidently also been chosen for their personal appearance. The archbishop is



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an honorary member of each *contrada*, and I am told that nearly every person of means subscribes to those in which he may have some property.

It was now time to hurry off to the Campo to make sure of being able to get to our seats. A dense crowd was pushing its way through the different approaches to the course. A large body of *carabinieri* were there to keep order, and kept every one on the move till they got to their respective seats, or had entered the railed-in centre of the square. A gun was fired to clear the course, and the last of the crowd was driven into the enclosure, which had already appeared as full as it could possibly hold. It is estimated that forty thousand people gather here every time, and there would probably be more were more space available. Every seat on the staging in front of every house has its occupant, every balcony is loaded with spectators, people are on the roofs, and are seen peeping from between the battlements of the communal palace. After the second gun, a squad of mounted *carabinieri* march round the course followed by a number of unmounted police, and when they have returned to the palace a sound of bells bursts forth from the Mangia campanile, and the cortège issues from a side street where it had formed up.

A mounted cavalier bearing the ensign of the Comune heads the procession—a grand-looking fellow in a green velvet cloak. He is followed by the mace-bearers and the trumpeters, the latter playing a refrain, on their long, straight trumpets, which sounded like an echo from the Middle Ages. The one half,



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relieving the other at intervals, kept up this refrain all the way round the course ; the municipal band which followed played a march, the trumpet notes forming a kind of *obbligato*. It was very impressive, and it would be interesting to be able to date this music. The refrain comes back to me now while I write, and the twentieth-century crowd gives place to one of the fifteenth, assembled here to welcome the Duke of Calabria, as a saviour from the tyrannies of their own elect.

The trumpeters were followed by representatives of the territories subject to the Sienese Republic, their banners being carried in a position denoting submissiveness ; there were forty in all, and from their costumes and bearing they might have stepped out of one of Pinturicchio's great frescoes. This part of the pageant was closed by a group of the palace officials.

Now come the *Comparsa*, headed by a drummer in a herald's dress, followed by the two *Alfieri*, who do the banner-play as they march along. The gorgeously arrayed *Capitano* comes next, accompanied by four squires bearing his shield, mace and lance ; the *Figurino* follows, but who or what he may be I could never find out for sure. He is in brilliantly coloured garb of some unknown period, and from the jests that passed between him and the spectators, we will put him down as the Jester. He precedes the racehorse, which is led by a page, while the jockey follows, mounted on a finely caparisoned horse used only during the pageant. He looks very different now from when I saw him at the trial race.

The *Comparsa* of the competing contrade all follow

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in the same order; their dress is of the same period, but has a distinctive arrangement of colouring in each case. The cheers of the spectators rose and fell in proportion to the skill shown by the *Alfieri*, and those who could successfully do the *salto del montone*, or sheep's leap, received a special ovation.

Next come the magistrates of the different wards, each accompanied by a page, dressed in scarlet, carrying his shield and sword; the executioner is also there, and the banner-bearers of the Terzi of the city.

Twelve pages, carrying a gigantic garland, march in front of what is the climax of the pageant, namely, the car surmounted by the 'Palio.' Four horses in caparisons of brocaded velvet draw the car with its coveted trophy. The arms of the Commune and of the Republic are on each side, as well as the banners of the Terzi of the city and those of the seventeen contrade.

Groups of men-at-arms, arquebusiers, halberdiers, bowmen, bailiffs and sheriffs close the magnificent pageant.

As each group has circled the course it takes its place in a staged enclosure immediately in front of the municipal palace. The length of the cortège is estimated to be more than half a mile, and the number of performers reaches a thousand. The horses are led back to the palace cortile, where the jockeys doff their gorgeous parade apparel and don a dress similar to those usually worn, with the exception of the iron head-piece, and in all probability some padding as a protection against the blows they give each other with those terrible thongs they carry instead of whips.

THE HOUSE OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA









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The impatience of the spectators is somewhat relieved by a dog having strayed into the course. The poor creature gets frightened and starts running, the noise increases to a roar, which only ceases after the dog has gone more than half round the course, and is happily caught by some *carabinieri* and carried beyond the cordon of people who block the exits from the Campo. The appearance of the horses awakens a babel of sound, in which we can just distinguish the names of the wards—‘Caterpillar! Giraffe! Snail! Tortoise!’ etc., as if the contents of a Noah’s Ark had been loosed. From where I sat the dense crowd kept changing in aspect, as the thousands of heads turned round to follow the horses’ course to the starting-point. At first a flesh-coloured mass, when the faces were all turned our way, then a broken series of tints when the heads were in profile, and as the horses reached the further end of the Campo the crowd became a pale yellow dotted with black. We then looked on thousands of straw hats with a sprinkling of black ones.

The roar of voices increased until the next gun was fired, and the horses made their start; then a dead silence followed, which lasted till one of the competitors got some way ahead of the others; a distant roar was then heard from the further end and increased as it was taken up our way, and the sound of ‘Bruco! Bruco!’ left no doubt in our minds that the Caterpillar was the leading horse. Most of the others followed in a confused group, with one or two riderless ones breaking away from it. The Caterpillar, being well ahead, could afford to slow down at the dangerous turning, and

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once past that he had it all his own way till he had gone the three necessary times round the course. It was curious to see the others go by, one rider catching hold of another till he was beaten off by the heavy thong. How any of them kept their seats is a wonder, bare-backed as they rode and down an inclined course. One or two more came off at the turning, and eventually about six got as far as the winning-post.

The pent-up crowd immediately overflowed into the course. Again I saw a half-dozen gendarmes rush forward to protect the winning jockey from his well-wishers and from others who might wish to harm him. He is guarded in this way till he is safe within the confines of the ward that employs him.

For the next few days he is the pet of his district, every one wishing to ply him with food and drink, and the prettiest girls proud of his kisses.

I painted my illustration of the 'Palio' during and after the one which takes place on the 16th of August, when I chose a seat getting a better view of the communal palace. The scenes in the square were much the same as during July ones, but the preceding events mark it out as the 'Palio' even better worth the seeing.

Like most fêtes dating back to former ages, the 'Palio' had a religious origin. In 1260, on the eve of the battle of Montaperto, the city of Siena and its territories were formally handed over to the Virgin Mary, and the two dates on which the races take place—the Visitation of Mary, and the day following her Assumption—testify to the veneration of the people to their Divine Protectress. The signal victory of the



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Sieneſe, in ſpite of the ſuperior forces of the Florentines, was a ſufficient proof to them that their city was the favoured one of the Queen of Heaven, and the reverses which followed a few years after did not diſabuse them of their cheriſhed idea. The firſt building erected after the ceſſation of the plague was the Loggia at the foot of the Mangia Tower, a chapel in her honour, and a thank-offering for her interceſſion. In 1524, when Pandolfo Petrucci was expelled from Siena, we read that the ‘Madonna delle Gracie’ was carried round the city in ſolemn proceſſion as a thankſgiving for having delivered them from the Tyrant; and two years later, while the town was beſieged by the papal army, Siena was rededicated to her Patroness. Inſtances ſuch as theſe, of the devotion of the Sieneſe to the ‘Regina Coeli,’ are found in every page of their hiſtory.

The belief of the people in the preference ſhown by the Madonna for their city is ſummed up in the words of Giralomo Gigli:—

‘Tu, che per dar tutto il ſue latte a Siena  
Il celeſte Figliuol non tiene allato.’

On the 15th of Auguſt, the day of the Aſſumption, the moſt gorgeous religious function of the year takes place in the Duomo, and the aſſociation of the Palio with ‘Our Lady of Auguſt’ is at once apparent when we enter the church. The banners of the different wards are affixed to the columns, and the Palio is expoſed in the centre of the nave. The crowds of country folk and ſtrangers, who aſſiſt at the maſs, have been attracted to Siena to witneſs the race on the

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following day. The stupid wooden covering is then removed from the pavement, and when the crowds of worshippers have gone, the 'graffito' scenes from the Old Testament, by Domenico di Niccolo and Beccafumi, can be studied.

The holiday interferes less with the harvest than the earlier one, and, remembering how the Campo was then packed with spectators, one wondered how the increased number of visitors would ever find a place.

The origin of the Palio and of the sports which preceded it are admirably described by Mr. Heywood in his standard work on that subject, *Our Lady of August and the Palio of Siena*.

LA CAPELLA S. CATERINA









## CHAPTER XII

### ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

*'Serva e schiava de' servi di Gesù Cristo'*

THE little belfry rising from the roof of St. Catherine's house, seen every time I went to my window, and her presentment in every church and chapel I visited, and even the name of our pension, put me continually in mind of Siena's greatest saint. I felt I could not leave without some pictorial record of her home. I painted the belfry and the roof of her house with the Mangia Tower rising above the houses in the background; but that was not a view of St. Catherine's house, as it is known to the people who visit Siena. First I visited the house itself, hoping to see something as it might have been during the life of the saint. I rang at a seventeenth-century doorway, and a young priest let me in, and conducted me through a series of late Renaissance chapels, which he explained as being her bedroom, her father's workshop, the kitchen, and so on. These chapels were interesting in their way, but had nothing to suggest a fourteenth-century habitation.

Had I reflected on the saintly habitations I had seen before, I might have been prepared for this. Was not the house of St. Francis, at Assisi, one of the most

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modern constructions there?—a chapel barely three hundred years old ; the same thing occurs at Viterbo, should we wish to see the house of S. Rosa, as well as in numerous other instances in the Latin countries. I might also have been warned by the Rococo shrines I had seen in Jerusalem, wherever anything had formerly stood connected with the life of our Lord. But seeing now written over the door ‘*Sponsae Christi Katherine domus*,’ I hoped to see something more reminiscent of the saint’s abode. The oratories and chapels are of different dates, the earliest having replaced the kitchen. The entrance to the church is in the Via Benincasa, on a lower level to that of the house itself, but is connected with it by passages and stairs. It contains little of note except a statue of St. Catherine by Neroccio, which is very good.

I went again to this church on the day of the second Palio, and the proceedings I witnessed left a rather bad impression. The little church is the contrada chapel of the ‘Goose,’ so it was there the horse was blest before it was taken to the race. Everything had passed off in a quiet and orderly manner at San Domenico, where I had first witnessed this ceremony ; but for some unaccountable reason a crowd of tourists and others flocked here till we were nearly packed to suffocation. Room had, nevertheless, to be found for the horse when it arrived, and it was not till the pressure of the incoming people had forced a portion of the spectators through a doorway into the sacristy that room for the beast could be made ; and as no one felt sure how a horse might behave in church, there



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was an unedifying scramble to get as far as possible from his hindquarters. Most of the foreigners probably felt, as I did, that this was not intended as an entertainment for the visitors, and that our presence was hampering the ceremony considerably; but jammed up against the wall, as we mostly were, retreat was impossible. The priest seemed a mild sort of man, and not able to show much authority, and he gave me the impression of disapproving of the whole thing. Happily, the horse did not misbehave, nor injure any one with his hoofs, and with a sigh of relief we were enabled to get back into the road.

A narrow street, running parallel to the Via Benincasa, ends in an archway passing through the house of St. Catherine, at the back of the church. A pretty covered court, said to be the work of Peruzzi, connects the chapels on the higher level with those below. The view of this fragment of the house seemed to me the only one which lent itself to pictorial treatment. It had, however, one great drawback, and that was the smell of the tanneries, which hung thicker here than anywhere else—a smell that even made my eyes smart. It is said that during the various visitations of the plague, the people living here were mostly immune. I thought the plague could stand most smells, but evidently this was too much for it. A feeling of safety in such a germ-killing odour, and a supply of tobacco, made some compensation for the discomfort; and after a while I almost ceased to notice it.

The street has a slight ascent, and the picturesque herring-bone brick pavement, unhappily replaced by

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grey flags, makes it an ideal place for a game, which probably no small boys, other than those of Siena, play. They would each put a large marble on the ground at the top of the street, and following it during its descent, yell out the name of the contrada the marble was supposed to represent. Great would be the distress of one little chap if the 'Snail' got stuck in a joint of the flags, and only equalled by the joy of the others if the 'Giraffe' and the 'Caterpillar' rolled merrily along. Shouts of joy let me know which had reached the chalk-line below where I sat. The names of the urchins often amused me as much as their sport. Dante was that of one, Bruno of another, and Amerigo occasionally visited this court. Raffaello looked quaint in a pair of his father's trousers shortened to his little legs, while Baldassare had long outgrown his. A peculiarity they share with the youngsters of Perugia is that their only form of begging is asking any stranger they see for foreign postage-stamps. Thinking that I might be going to Perugia, I had come provided with an assortment, and while encouraging an innocent form of mendicity, I soon became very popular.

Having said enough about the house, let us refer to the saint who dwelt there. She was born in 1347, one hundred and sixty-five years after the birth of St. Francis of Assisi, and one hundred and seventy-seven years after that of St. Dominic. And as she is one of the three mediæval saints who had the greatest influence on their times, it is well to remember how their dates stand in relation to each other. She was one of a family of thirteen children, her parents being

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Giacomo and Lapa Benincasa. They seem to have been in easy circumstances, and it is said that the father's trade of a dyer was a prosperous one. We are told that the family lived with their parents till Giacomo's death in 1368, and as the year of Catherine's birth was followed by that of the great plague, known as the Black Death, she was possibly spared owing to the tanneries surrounding the house.

At an early age Catherine is said to have seen visions, which she interpreted as a call to the religious life. Her parents discouraged the austerities she practised, not because they were irreligious themselves, but—according to one of the Dominican friars who visited the house—they hoped, owing to her extreme beauty, that a brilliant marriage might be in store for her. The disinclinations of her father were finally overcome when, finding his daughter at prayer, he saw a dove hovering over her head, and, though she said she could not see it herself, the father was convinced that it was the Holy Spirit of God, and gave his leave to her taking the habit of the Sisters of Penance, an offshoot of the Dominican order. She remained in her father's house during the next three years, where she elected to do the most menial work : ‘*serva e schiava de' servi di Gesù Cristo*’ are the words she herself uses to describe this apprenticeship. Dressed in the white robe of purity and the black cloak of humility, she frequently repaired to the Dominican church, which still stands on the hill above her house.

We can follow her history by the help of the voluminous letters she left, and are still preserved in the city



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archives, as well as from the writings of her contemporaries. In the latter, we find that in the Capella delle Volte, 'she smelt the fragrance of lilies and heard the music of Paradise, and Mary Magdalene singing with singular sweetness,' that Christ was continually by her side, and that she could talk to Him as friend to friend. Her mystical marriage with Christ is also described: how the Virgin Mary, with her heavenly retinue, appeared to her, and gave her in marriage to her Divine Son; and He, 'gladly accepting, espoused her with a ring, which had a right wondrous diamond set in the midst of four goodly pearls.' We are also told that the ring was invisible to all except to her who wore it.

She had now reached the age of twenty, and from thence we hear of her visiting the sick and dying. The good old Benincasa freely allowed her to dispense in charity from the abundance of his gains.

We gather from her letters that, during an ecstatic trance, her Divine Spouse appeared to her, and drew forth her heart from her side and placed His own there, that He also called her to a life of greater activity in the world she had abandoned. 'The salvation of many souls demands thy return; nor shalt thou any longer keep that way of life that up to now thou hast kept.' We hear of her next bringing sinners to repentance, healing dissensions which had been the cause of much bloodshed; and in the pestilence which raged in 1372 she tends the stricken from whom others fled in fear.

Amongst her disciples was the Frate Tommaso Caffarini, the author of the *Leggenda minore*, also



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Raimondo delle Vigne da Capua, who wrote her life, and many men and women who were members of some of Siena's ruling houses.

Her activities later spread beyond the confines of the Republic. The seat of the papacy had since 1305 been at Avignon, and the Papal States were gradually being absorbed by the growing republics in central Italy. Bernabò Visconti, the tyrant of Milan, was about to annex what little remained of the temporal power, when Pope Gregory XI. sent his mercenaries to oppose him. The power which Catherine had now become is seen in the way she reconciled the two parties. Amongst her letters there is one to the Cardinal Legate at Bologna, who was to direct the campaign, in which she implores him to lay down his arms, and to consider the loss of souls as greater than that of cities. She also wrote to the tyrant Visconti, pointing out to him the wickedness of fighting the Head of the Church, and imploring his submission to 'the Vicar who holds the Keys of the blood of Christ crucified.' A truce is proclaimed, Bernabò Visconti sends an ambassador to ask her advice, and the Vicar Apostolic writes to her in the name of the Pope. In answer to the latter, she denounces the nepotism and luxury that are ruining the Church. Instead of fighting for the temporalities of the Church, it were better to strive to put down 'the wolves and incarnate demons of pastors who attend to nought else save eating, and fine palaces, and their horses. Alas, that what Christ won upon the wood of the cross should be squandered with harlots!'

During the truce between the Pope and the Duke

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of Milan, preparations are set on foot for a crusade, and Catherine throws herself heart and soul into the movement. She writes to the English condottiere, Sir John Hawkwood, urging him and his mercenaries to leave the service of the devil and to fight no more against Christians, but to join with those who were ready to lay down their lives in driving the infidels out of the Holy Places. This was not without effect, for we are told that Sir John Hawkwood swore on the Sacrament that he and his mercenaries would join the crusade.

Catherine was sent to Pisa to negotiate with that republic on behalf of the Pope; this was in 1375, a remarkable year in the annals of hagiology, for in that city, while she prayed in the church of S. Cristina, she received the Stigmata.

In the church of S. Domenico, on the high ground above her house, we see in the chapel dedicated to St. Catherine a beautiful fresco by Sodoma, known as *il Svenimento*. St. Catherine is represented as recovering from a swoon, and is being lifted up by two of her disciples, both in the habit of her order. On her hands are seen the wounds of the Passion of our Lord, and He, in whose service she has laboured, appears above in the act of blessing His devoted servant.

Need of her energies were now more than ever required, and, as if fortified by this fresh mark of Divine favour, she determined to bring the Pope from Avignon, and make Rome once more the seat of the papacy.

We hear no more of the projected crusade, and war is again raging between an alliance of the Central

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Italian republics and the Holy See. She sends legates to the various states to try and effect a peace, and goes herself to Florence, after having secured the neutrality of Pisa and Lucca. Florence, being the prime mover in the alliance against the Papal States, had been placed under an interdict, and the Florentines received Catherine as a possible mediator between them and the Pope. She had written many letters to his Holiness, urging him to call back the troops he had sent against the Republic, and also to replace his representatives in Italy by men who had the spiritual welfare of the people more at heart. She exhorts him to return to Rome. 'Look to it that you come not with a power of armed men,' she writes, 'but with the Cross in your hand, like a meek lamb.' Her letters failing to bring the Pontiff to Italy, she goes herself to Avignon. She is shocked at the luxury and corruption of the papal court, and boldly denounces them to the Pope. Her importunities in time overcame the shilly-shallying of Gregory, and after three months he left Avignon and journeyed to the Eternal City.

Thanks to the indefatigable labours of Catherine, Rome, after a lapse of seventy-two years, became once more the seat of the sovereign Pontiffs. The joy of Catherine was, however, of short duration. Gregory was either too weak to control his mercenary troops, or indifferent to the atrocities they committed in the northern part of the Papal States; he resented the remonstrances which Catherine addressed to him, while she, labouring in his cause, lost the sympathies of her fellow-citizens, who suspected her of leanings towards



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the hated Guelfs. Gregory died in 1378, the year following his entry into Rome, and he was succeeded by Urban vi., a man of a very different character. The reforms which Catherine had always urged Gregory to undertake were now begun, and in so bold a manner that the corrupt Curia fled from the Roman court, and under the pretence that the election of Urban had been forced on them, they set up, as Antipope, Cardinal Robert of Geneva, the man who, of all others, was most responsible for the atrocities committed by the papal mercenaries of Gregory xi.

Christendom was now divided into two camps, and Italy became their battlefield. Catherine succeeded in winning over to the cause of Urban the republics of Venice, Florence, Perugia and Siena, and these, with the hired mercenaries of the Pope, finally overthrew the adherents of Clement vii., the title the Antipope had assumed.

Catherine lived to see him whom she called the true Vicar of Christ firmly established on the throne of St. Peter, and she died before the great expectations he had raised failed in their fulfilment.

On the 29th of April 1380 she passed away, surrounded by her disciples. Alessia Saracini is there, one of the noble ladies portrayed by Sodoma in the fresco at San Domenico. Mona Lapa, the saint's mother, who had joined her daughter's sisterhood, is there also ; and a certain Barduccio, who describes the death-scene in a letter which is still preserved. 'And she prayed,' he writes, 'with such great affection that not only our hearts as we listened, but the very stones,



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could have been broken.' The last words on her lips were, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my soul and spirit.'

In 1461 the Sienese petitioned their fellow-citizen, Pius II., to add Catherine Benincasa to the catalogue of the virgin saints. Her canonisation followed a few months later.

The church of San Domenico is full of her memories. In the Capella delle Volte we find an altarpiece painted by her contemporary and disciple, Andrea di Vanni; it is not a very convincing portrait of the saint, but having a probable measure of likeness. A printed tablet tells us that, 'Here she was invested with the habit of S. Dominic; and was the first woman to wear it.' It also tells us, 'Here Jesus Christ appeared before her in the figure of a beggar, and she gave Him alms, and He promised to own her before all the world at the Judgment Day. She gave Him her robe, and He gave her an invisible garment which for ever after kept her from the cold.' You are shown a piece of the original pavement on which our Lord trod during His converse with the saint.

Passing on to the Chapel of St. Catherine, decorated with the frescoes of Sodoma, already mentioned, we see a precious reliquary on the altar, which contains the actual head of the saint. This is exposed on great occasions, and the last time I saw it was when the contrada horse stood before it to be blessed before the race. Her white veil covers all except the mask of the face, and it is therefore less gruesome than is the wont of some relics.

I don't know whether I did not enjoy this great

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barn-like church more than the highly decorated interior of the cathedral. The few contents of supreme beauty are seen to a greater advantage, and there is never the consciousness of being in a show-place. In the second chapel to the left of the high-altar are two pictures, one by Matteo di Giovanni of St. Catherine, St. Mary Magdalen, and St. Barbara ; and the picture opposite to it is of the Madonna and a group of saints, by Benvenuto di Giovanni, also known as Benvenuto da Siena. Both pictures are of the late fifteenth century, and may be taken as good examples of Sieneſe art of that date. The effects of the Renaissance are almost imperceptible, and the religious sentiment is ſtill the pervading note ; the beautiful colouring, eſpecially of the latter, and the delicate patterning and careful treatment of the detail makes one think of theſe pictures as being acts of worſhip more than the conſcientious execution of a commiſſion.

Now if we return to the chapel of St. Catherine, we can fully realiſe how Sodoma, who was only ſome thirty years later than the Giovanni, was the deathblow to the religious art of Siena. The more perfect drawing of the Renaissance is here, the grouping of the figures is more dramatic, and ſhows a far greater knowledge of compoſition, and the beauty of the faces of his principal perſonages has ſeldom been equalled ſince. But, unleſs we accept that all things beautiful partake of the divine, the truly religious ſentiment of the earlier men is totally abſent, and except for a flicker now and again we ſee it no more in ſubſequent work of the Sieneſe ſchool of painting.

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I was often in San Domenico on account of the view I was painting from a little window behind the high altar, and fascinated as I was at first by the frescoes of Sodoma, I found my ardour cooling down as I became better acquainted with the more modest pictures of the two Giovanni.

I cannot leave San Domenico without mention of a very touching and beautifully phrased epitaph on a wall-tablet :—

‘ Annae filiolar  
Trimulae scitulae blandulae  
Quae patre elato  
Unum mihi doloris solamen  
Una spes vitae relictæ  
xxx ab eius obitus die ad superos evolavit  
Heu vidua heu mater infelix.’

As a wail from the walls of this barn-like church came the plaint of the poor widow, robbed of her one remaining consolation.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PAINTERS OF SIENA, AND A VISIT TO MONTE OLIVETO

‘These most turbulent of Italian people, who are ever in division, and govern their commonwealth more fondly than any other town in Italy, chose that their painters should give them art that was exclusively the handmaid of religion.’—  
EDMUND G. GARDNER.

A STUDENT of the Sienese school of painting cannot do better than to spend a few mornings at the ‘Belle Arte’ before he searches out his favourites in the churches. Perhaps more than in any other gallery I know does the sense of things out of place strike one at first. Rows of labelled and catalogued altar-pieces are liable to depress the beholder, as do the contents of a familiar house when spread out in an auction room. But we may be thankful, nevertheless, that these works are in the city where they were created; and as many of the altars they adorned are no longer in existence, it is to the credit of the Sienese that these works are carefully placed out of harm’s way.

With the exception of Simone Martini, the whole school is represented here, and as far as possible in chronological order. In the ‘Sala dei Primitivi’ our archæological tastes are more appealed to than our artistic, till we arrive at the works of Duccio di Buoninsegna, and, until we know him better, the interest we



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feel here is chiefly in discovering a master who emerges from the purely traditional art of earlier Christendom. We may also trace amongst the Primitives a few with a slight personal note which may have helped in the formation of Duccio's art. Cimabue was his senior by some forty years ; but it is doubtful whether the great Florentine could have influenced his Sienese rival, the two cities having been constantly at war with each other during the thirteenth century ; and the same would apply to Giotto, who was nearly the same age as Duccio. We may therefore take it that the Sienese school sprang into being independently of that of Florence, and that Duccio di Buoninsegna was the chief instrument in raising it from the earlier traditions. We will speak of him later on when we see his important work in the 'Opera del Duomo.' We have seen the great works of his contemporaries Lippo Memmi, Simone Martini, and Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Communal Palace, and at first we find it difficult to decide who of them can claim the pre-eminence. It was my good fortune to have been in Siena last August, when a large collection of Duccio's works were on exhibition in the Opera del Duomo, and any doubts I may have had before were set at rest. Duccio is, in my opinion, the greatest of Sienese painters.

In the second room we see some very beautiful work of the elder brother Lorenzetti, Pietro, as well as three masterpieces by the younger, Ambrogio. Of Lippo Memmi there is unfortunately very little, and it is doubtful if what is ascribed to him be genuinely his work.

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So far we have mentioned the masters of that great period in Sieneſe art which ſtarts from Duccio and ends with the plague of 1348, a date which ſome critics give as marking the decline. It certainly was followed by men of an inferior ſtamp, but the ſchool roſe again in the middle of the fifteenth century, and produced ſome great painters, until the advent of Sodoma killed Sieneſe art as a diſtinctive ſchool of painting.

Sano di Pietro is the great maſter of this period, and is well ſeconded by Giovanni di Paolo and Domenico di Bartolo. In ſtudying the work of theſe men, it is hard to believe that it belongs to the middle of the fifteenth century. It is ſtill as much the patterning of the goldſmith's art as that of the painter ; but it is ſo beautiful and refined that one ceases to look for the qualities which at that time diſtinguiſhed the work of the Venetians. Two rooms are devoted to Sano di Pietro, and if we ſtudy theſe gem-like works, we will hesitate to place the decline of Sieneſe art as far back as 1348. He is deſcribed by his contemporaries as 'a famous painter, and a man entirely dedicated to God' —a worthy rival of the Florentine, Fra Angelico.

Giovanni di Paolo is nearly as well represented as Sano ; it is typical Sieneſe work of this period, but the little we ſee of Domenico di Bartolo ſhows a diſtinct foreign influence.

Matteo and Benvenuto di Giovanni, whoſe work we have ſeen at San Domenico, are both well represented. They are the two maſters who followed ſhortly after Sano di Pietro, and ſlightly preceded Sodoma. In the large gallery there is an important altar-piece by Matteo,

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and on the same wall a large triptych by Benvenuto, both of them superbly beautiful works ; the former showing more personality than the latter, but in Benvenuto we still have the rich colouring and marvellous patterning of the earlier masters.

We turn round and face Sodoma's famous 'Deposition from the Cross.' It is an early work of the master, and would be contemporaneous with the later works of either of the Giovanni, but two centuries seem to divide them. I can well understand that those who are thoroughly imbued with the qualities of the earlier men may feel indifferent or even hostile to that of Sodoma. The Church being his patron, he painted religious subjects ; but had he been commissioned to paint pagan mythology, the absence of religious sentiment in his work would not be felt, and he would probably have been ranked with the greatest painters of Italy. Although he became a Sienese by adoption, his work is that of the Milanese school. His 'Deposition' is a somewhat scattered composition, and none of his work has the gem-like colour of the great Sienese painters, but we can well imagine how the beautiful draughtsmanship and the extreme beauty of his personages must have influenced the younger men of his time ; unfortunately they never attained his qualities, and lost those which we associate with their school.

In the same room is a fresco of his, the 'Descent into Limbo,' with a figure of Eve, one of the loveliest women ever painted. His 'Christ at the Column' is a superb bit of modelling of a nude torso and a beautifully drawn head, but there is nothing more. Had it been a 'Prometheus chained to the rock' it would have been

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much more pleasurable to look at. His contemporaries and immediate followers who are represented here interested me very little.

I went a long day's excursion with some friends to see the Sodoma frescoes at Monte Oliveto Maggiore, my intention also being to spend some days in the monastery, should it answer my expectations. We took an early train to Asciano, some twenty miles south-east of Siena. After a few miles we saw the cypress-covered hill of Montaperto, and we discussed the great battle, and tried to quote Dante's immortal phrase :—

‘ Lo strazio e ’l grande scempio  
Che fece l’Arbia colorata in rosso.’

‘ The havoc and the great slaughter that dyed the Arbia red.’ It would have taken little to colour the Arbia as we saw it then; a long drought had reduced it to a shallow stream. Further on, the landscape might have suggested some scenes to Dante when he wrote his *Inferno*—barren and deeply fissured mountains of an unpleasant ashy colour; but as we neared Asciano the hills had prettier outlines, which, with their homesteads and stacks of corn, reminded me of the Sussex downs.

Asciano is a picturesque little town, still unhurt by its proximity to a railway station. Here we engaged a carriage, and after a six-mile drive up an ascending road we reached Chiusure, now only a village, but enough of its old walls left to show that it had been a stronghold in mediæval times. We are told that the country round here was similar to the *Inferno*-looking region beyond Asciano, and that the monks had turned it into the cultivable area we now beheld. Slightly



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below us, we looked down on the great monastery, partly hid by groves of cypress.

While we wind down the road to the convent gate, let us consider him who turned this region, known as the desert of Accona, into a fertile countryside. We must go back to the year 1313, when, in the walled town of Buonconvento, which we can see down in the plain, the Emperor Henry VII. met his death. How far this event may have influenced the head of the house of Tolomei to renounce the world and to retire to the wilderness of Accona, it is hard to say. His branch of that family was Ghibelline, and he must have seen in the death of the emperor the extinction of their hopes. Giovanni Tolomei was not only the head of that party in Siena, but had, through his talents and family influence, attained the highest political power, and the Sienese, always jealous of their liberties being jeopardised by the power of one man, may have hastened his flight to the wilderness. John Addington Symonds points out that the death of Henry VII. also caused Dante to seek refuge from the Guelfs by his flight to the lonely convent of Fonte Avellana. Be this how it may, we know that Giovanni Tolomei gave up his riches to the poor, and only kept, of his great estates, this wilderness of Accona.

His monastic chronicler tells us that Giovanni Tolomei was aiming at nothing less than the tyranny of Siena, when a sudden blindness turned his thoughts from the things of this world to that of the next. His prayers, that his sight might be restored, were heard ; but the revelations made to him during his blindness

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altered the whole course of his life. Accompanied by two noble comrades, he forsook the vanities of this world and retired to the desert of Accona. We are told that they lived in caves which they hollowed out of the rock, and made their beds of chestnut leaves ; they also built a little chapel dedicated to St. Scolastica, the sister of St. Benedict, and their food was wild fruit and their drink water. By day they laboured to turn the desert into a garden, and by night they meditated on things eternal.

They were not long here before others joined them, and the little community lived with no other rule than the ties of charity to hold it together. Giovanni Tolomei took the name of Bernardo, after St. Bernard, the Benedictine abbot of Clairvaux, and we shall henceforth know him as the Blessed Bernardo. It is related that in a dream he saw a ladder ascending to heaven, where Christ sat next to Our Lady, clad in a white raiment. Led by angels, men ascended this ladder, and amongst them Bernardo recognised his companions. Taking this for a divine call, he and one of his followers, Ambrogio Piccolomini, journeyed to Avignon, to petition the Pope to grant them a rule. They were kindly received by John xxii., who gave them a letter to the Bishop of Arezzo, commanding the latter to furnish them with a rule authorised by the Holy Church.

The warrior prelate—for he was no other than the famous Guido Tarlati of the house of Pietra-Mala—seemed the last man to apply to for assistance in founding a monastic order ; but a dream once more set

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matters aright. In it Our Lady appeared to him and said : ‘ I love the valley of Accona and its pious solitaries. Give them the rule of Benedict. But thou shalt strip them of their mourning weeds, and clothe them in white raiment, the symbol of my virgin purity. Their hermitage shall change its name, and henceforth shall be called Mount Olivet, in memory of the ascension of my Divine Son, the which took place on the Mount of Olives. I take this family beneath my protection ; and therefore it is my will it should be called henceforth the congregation of St. Mary of Mount Olivet.’ Five years later the order was confirmed by John XXII.

During the plague known as the Black Death in 1348 the Blessed Bernardo and his followers left their retreat to attend the sick and the dying. Each one went where duty called him, and they all met in Siena on the Feast of the Assumption. He addressed his spiritual children for the last time in the convent outside the Porta Tufi, and shortly after died of the plague.

He was the first of the four saints that Siena has added to the calendar. The Blessed Giovanni Colombini, the founder of the Gesuati, was a young man when Bernardo died. St. Catherine was born the year before that event, and San Bernardino carried on her work after her death. It is singular that they should all have been living in the fourteenth century, when Siena was a by-word on account of its luxury and wild extravagance.

The monastic enclosure is entered through a portal guarded with a machicolated tower, and, but for a



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Della Robbia relief above the doors, we might have been entering the mediæval stronghold of some robber baron. A winding avenue of cypress trees, with here and there a chapel in the coppice on either side, leads down to the monastery. A huge red brick building towers above the stables and barns, which, with the church, close in the court. After some shouting on the part of our driver an old man appeared, evidently awakened from a profound sleep, and with difficulty we made him understand that we wished to put up the horses for a few hours, while we visited the convent. The great building, with accommodation for three hundred monks, had a deserted look, although kept in a good state of repair. When the old man rang the bell, we were startled out of the silence of this sleepy hollow.

A handsome monk, 'clothed in white raiment, the symbol of virgin purity,' let us in and conducted us to the church. He is one of the five who are still allowed to remain since the suppression of the convent, in order to keep the place aired, and to entertain such visitors who may wish to spend a day or two here to study the contents of what is now a national monument. He spoke of the new order of things with that submissiveness which has generally surprised me whenever I have had occasion to enter on that subject with any of his cloth.

The church did not long detain us. The interior had been remodelled in the eighteenth century, and such pictures as had been worth moving are now, doubtless, numbered and catalogued in some museum. The intarsia-work of the choir-stalls, by Fra Giovanni da



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Verona, is as good an example as can be seen anywhere, and there is a very handsome reading-desk of the same period, that of the early cinquecento. But it was not for these that we came here ; the large cloister adorned by the frescoes of Sodoma and of Luca Signorelli was the goal of our expedition.

The subject of the frescoes is entirely devoted to the life of St. Benedict. The monk walked us round, explaining the miracles with a childish faith, not shared apparently by either of the painters who had depicted them. The tinkling of a bell, suggesting something of interest in the refectory : our guide disappeared, and we were able to study these compositions, regardless of the childish miracles which some of them represent. They were begun in 1497 by Luca Signorelli, who had completed eight of the frescoes when he left to undertake his far greater work in the Duomo at Orvieto. As these have been more exposed to the sun and the weather, they are mostly in a very bad state of repair. In 1505 and the following year Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, known as Sodoma, continued the work, adding twenty-six panels to those of his predecessor. One only, of the whole series, is by another hand, and that is by Il Riccio, a son-in-law of Sodoma, and was painted some forty years later.

In the first and second frescoes, as we enter from the church, we detect the influence of Pinturicchio, who was then at work in the Libreria of the Duomo of Siena. Any guide-book will tell the sequence of the story : we will therefore confine ourselves to the work, and the man who did it. We get a portrait

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of Sodoma himself on the third panel. A handsome fellow of about thirty, with a rather dissolute expression, he is gorgeously attired in the clothes of a young nobleman, which we are told were given to him by the Abbot in part payment for his work, after the original possessor had discarded them to take the habit of the order. He seems proud of his newly acquired splendour, and is surrounded by his pet animals, of which he kept quite a menagerie : the miracle of St. Benedict he treats as a mere incident in the composition.

Vasari, the painter and art critic of the sixteenth century, carries his dislike of the man to the depreciation of his work. He was still young when Sodoma died, but probably knew him personally, and, like some critics, may have received scant courtesy from the object of his criticisms. Vasari enlarges on the painter's liking for his pets : ' He was fond of keeping in his house all sorts of strange animals—badgers, squirrels, monkeys, wild cats, dwarf donkeys, racing-horses, little Elba ponies, jackdaws, bantams, doves of India, and as many other queer creatures as he could get hold of.' He goes on to say that ' he kept a raven which he had learnt to talk, and to imitate his voice so well, that when people knocked at his door they mistook it for that of Giovannantonio himself.' We are also told that he carried off the prize in one of the races in the Campo at Siena. His love of finery is described by Vasari thus : ' He attired himself in pompous clothes, wearing doublets of brocade, cloaks trimmed with gold lace, gorgeous caps, neck-chains, and other vanities of a like description fit for buffoons

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and mountebanks'—a strange creature to send amongst these monks, vowed to poverty and humility. They do not, however, seem to have resented his stay with them, for, to quote Vasari once more : ' nobody could describe the amusement he furnished to those good fathers, who christened him Mattaccio (the big mad-man), or the insane tricks he played there.' The solemn-faced monk who showed us round smiled when he pointed out the portrait, as if some of the painter's jokes were still remembered by the few remaining occupants of the monastery.

There is nothing here to bear out the art critic's suggestion that Bazzi painted subjects unworthy of a religious house, unless he alluded to the petty miracles the painter was set to portray. There is nothing which could give offence were these frescoes in the cloisters of a nunnery. His art is Pagan more than Christian, but so is that of most of the ecclesiastical work after the close of the fifteenth century. His work does not glow with the colour of the earlier Sienese, but in this series it is always refined and harmonious. He doubtless chose his models from amongst the monks he lived with, as every head has the strong individuality of a convincing portrait. His composition is often criticised, but here it seems perfect in nearly every fresco.

One very beautiful picture evoked some criticism from a Norwegian art critic who was of our party ; for what would have been a perfect composition was slightly marred by the colour of the group of figures on the right-hand side, overbalancing that of the monks



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on the left. We discovered the cause of this later on. The subject is a quaint one ; it is that of the wicked monk, Florentius, introducing into the monastery a bevy of young women of easy virtue, but whose evil influence is checked by the appearance of St. Benedict at a balcony above the heads of the perturbed brothers. It appears that the painter entered into the spirit of this subject more thoroughly than the Abbot approved, and that the latter insisted on his draping. '*queste male femmine*,' who first appeared in the fresco minus their garments. As a group of nude figures the colour harmony, with the creamy white habits of the monks on the other side, would doubtless have been perfect ; and though he subdued the colour of the drapery as much as the character of the wearers would allow, it nevertheless has upset the balance of the composition. The group of young women gave the painter his chance of introducing some beautiful faces, and although each individual looks modest enough to appear at a prayer-meeting, such facial beauty must have been disturbing to the minds of the cenobites.

The sequence of the story is continued in a fresco of Luca Signorelli, called '*La punizione di Florenzio*.' The wicked monk is being crushed by the falling in of his chamber, and a devil is carrying off his soul. Among the simpler compositions is the '*Miracle of Maurus and Placidus*,' where the former is standing on the surface of a lake and rescuing the partly submerged Placidus. The two figures are relieved against a superbly suggested landscape.

The work of Sodoma, as we see it in the churches



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and galleries, is very unequal, but in this cloister it is seldom below his highest level.

The excursion to Monte Oliveto is worth every one's while, should he be in Siena, apart from these works of art in the cloisters. The convent is beautifully situated, overlooking the extensive valley of the Ombrone; Montalcino, on its airy seat, is outlined against the sky on the range of hills which shut in the valley to the south, and Siena crowns the heights between us and the distant Volterranean hills. The walled and turreted Buonconvento lies in the plain below, little changed since Henry VII. drank of the fatal cup, and time and weather have not yet obliterated what the vicissitudes of the Middle Ages have left of Chiusure. The cypresses lining the paths of the monastery enclosure, and the cultivated fruit-trees, contrast with the wild desert places which were beyond the power of the monks to reclaim.

A call to the hill towns, which give as great a charm to Tuscany as the lagoons do to Venice, prevented me from making a stay in the grand old monastery. May it be a pleasure deferred!

## CHAPTER XIV

### DUCCIO DI BUONINSEGNA

‘Duccio, properly regarded, is the last of the great artists of antiquity, in contrast to Giotto, who was the first of the moderns.’—BERENSON.

IT is a far cry from Sodoma to Duccio di Buoninsegna. Shortly after our visit to Monte Oliveto a unique exhibition, of all the available works of the earlier master, was opened in the galleries of the Opera del Duomo. This building may be described as the museum of the Cathedral, and is built in an angle of the projected nave, the completion of which was abandoned during the Black Death in 1348. It is visited by every one who goes to Siena, on account of Duccio’s great work, the ‘Ancona,’ which has been for some time placed in the large gallery on the second floor. This gallery was cleared of everything else so as to make room for the Duccio exhibition of last August, and those who were fortunate enough to have been in Siena then could study the work of this master almost in its entirety. With no undue exaggeration, he and Giotto may be taken as the two supreme painters of the Middle Ages.

I have often heard it remarked, by many who feel it their duty to run round the churches and galleries in Italy, that the works of the so-called religious school of painters all resemble each other. Those who, on

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the other hand, have given a careful study to the works of the fourteenth century will come to the conclusion that as much individuality is to be found in the work of the leading masters as in those of the later schools who treated subjects in common. Except that Duccio and Giotto both were inspired by a strong religious sentiment, their work is so different that it is hard to believe that they were contemporaries and had lived within forty miles of each other. Mr. Berenson, in his work, *Central Italian Painters*, emphasises this in his phrase : ‘ Duccio, properly regarded, is the last great artist of antiquity, in contrast to Giotto, who was the first of the moderns.’ We cannot, unfortunately, compare them in our National Gallery, where Duccio is inadequately represented by four small works, while Giotto is not represented at all. But as there is a vast number of people who, some in duty bound and others from a genuine appreciation, go to Padua and Assisi to see the work of Giotto, there are comparatively few to whom Duccio is no more than a name. And though they will not have the unique opportunity of seeing a collection of his work similar to that of August 1912, they would, nevertheless, do well to go to Siena to see the ‘ Ancona,’ permanently placed in the Opera del Duomo.

It was painted between 1308 and 1311, to be placed over the high altar in the Cathedral, which in those days stood under the cupola. ‘ A public holiday was proclaimed,’ writes Mr. Gardner in *The Story of Siena*, ‘ when it was completed. With ringing of bells from churches and palaces, the musicians of the

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Signoria marching in front with trumpets, drums and tambourines, the picture was solemnly carried in triumph from the painter's workshop through the Via di Stalloreggi, along the Via di Città, then down and round the Campo, and up again to its place in the Duomo. 'On the day that it was carried to the Duomo,' writes an anonymous chronicler, who was probably present, 'the shops were shut; and the Bishop bade that a goodly and devout company of priests and friars should go in solemn procession, accompanied by the *Signori Nove* and all the officers of the Commune, and all the people; all the most worthy followed close upon the picture, according to their degree, with lights burning in their hands; and then behind them came the women and children, with great devotion. And they accompanied the said picture as far as the Duomo, making procession round the Campo as is the use, all the bells sounding joyously for the devotion of so noble a picture as is this. And all that day they offered up prayers, with great alms to the poor, praying God and His Mother, who is our advocate, that He may defend us in His infinite mercy from all adversity and all evil, and that He may keep us from the hands of traitors and enemies of Siena.'

This took place about thirty years after the Florentines had paid a similar honour to the Madonna of Cimabue, and which we are told in Lindsay's *Christian Art* was 'followed by the whole population, and with such triumph and rejoicings that the quarter where the painter dwelt obtained the name, which it has ever since retained, of Borgo Allegri.'



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These two Republics were worthy of the great men they produced, and it is my belief that modern Italy will again take its place as the leading art school of Europe. Both the state and the municipalities are prepared to make some sacrifice to encourage their contemporary artists, and a noble example is set them by their king. The nobility are prevented from disposing of their art treasures to other countries, and the merchants and manufacturers patronise the artists of their day, whose work is, after all, much more in harmony with a modern home.

What could be more absurd, setting aside the irreverence, than a merchant prince giving large sums for the spoils of the altars to adorn the walls of his modern mansion, he neither appreciating the intrinsic beauty of the early work he has acquired, nor being in sympathy with the religious intent of the painter. And these things are usually bought with the stockbroker's anticipation of a future rise in their value. They often add insult to injury by posing as art patrons when, for all they care, their contemporary artists might starve. We see this taking place in England, and unless a healthier tendency sets in, the British school of painting, which for the last two centuries has been one of the two greatest schools in Europe, will cease to exist.

What has the state done in England to encourage the three men who have lately passed away? Is there any public building adorned by Watts except by such work as he gave as a free gift? And even his gifts were not always accepted, for it may not be known to

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all that Watts offered to decorate with frescoes the classical entrance hall of the Euston Station, stipulating only that the London and North-Western Railway Company should pay for the cost of the scaffolding. So little was this generous offer appreciated that the company declined it, so as to save themselves the trumpery expense of the staging. There is, however, one consolation, which is, that the precious work Watts would have given us then might, for want of proper care, have been blackened out of all recognition by the smoke from the station, and that the time he would have spent at Euston was employed on easel pictures and portraits, which are likely to be properly cared for by even the least appreciative of their owners, from the fact of their having a money value. The proverbial swine happily does not always gobble up the pearls which are cast before it.

Lord Leighton made a gift to South Kensington Museum of two beautiful mural paintings illustrating 'The Arts of Peace' and 'The Arts of War,' and another to the Royal Exchange, hoping that it might be an incentive to our wealthy citizens to commission his brother artists and their successors to cover the blank spaces on the walls of our public buildings. His generous action met at first with approval, and a few more historic events of the city of London were recorded on the walls of the Exchange ; Sir William Richmond was also commissioned to decorate the interior of St. Paul's, and has been engaged in the Central Criminal Court ; but instead of in every way encouraging this laudable beginning, our art critics seemed to think it their duty to

VIA DELLE SPERANDIE, SIENA









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turn it into ridicule when they did not break out in actual abuse, with the result that the would-be art patrons close their pockets.

What has the state or any municipality done to give the public the benefit of Burne-Jones's genius? Nothing that I know of. A few church windows, given by private individuals, is all the work we can see of his, more than his easel pictures. A noble example was set by Manchester when it honoured itself in honouring its citizen, Ford Madox Brown. Possibly the criticisms showered on that master's work may have discouraged other municipalities from any intended art patronage. A farthing-on-the-rates kind of patronage, so as to build an art school and pay the salary of a certificated drawing-master from South Kensington may do some good in developing a liking for things beautiful; but greater sacrifices than that are required if we wish our cities to vie with those of Italy. Had the Sieneſe treated Duccio and his fellow-artists as we treated the men I have mentioned, and are ſtill treating our leading painters, Siena would not now be the goal of every art ſtudent who wiſhes to ſtudy the works of her eminent citizens. Had the daily newspaper, with its professional art critic on its ſtaff, exiſted in Florence or Siena in the days when a great work of art was the cauſe of national rejoicing, the art critic might have found it much eaſier to turn theſe works into ridicule than to point out their beauty, for I have often heard comments from people, ignorant of art, that were diſtinctly funny. The paper and its art critic would, however, have known better, for the people in thoſe

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days had a rude and ready way of showing their disapproval.

I read the art notices of the exhibitions while I was in Italy, and their tendency was to point out the best work of their contemporaries, and to fairly criticise their shortcomings, but never to damn wholesale an exhibition and discourage the art patrons, without whom art must of necessity cease to exist.

But let us return to the great work of Duccio which caused the Sieneese to set aside their faction fights, to honour their divine Patroness, as well as their citizen who had so worthily portrayed her. The Blessed Virgin and the child Jesus are in the centre of the great panel, with angels clustering around her throne. Kneeling at her feet are the patron saints of Siena, Crescentius, Victor, Savinus and Ansanus, and standing on either side are apostles, St. John the Baptist, and St. Agnes and St. Catherine of Alexandria. The physical beauty of these personages is not such as we should have got from some later painters, but there is a spiritual beauty which makes us forget that. Dante describes the face of the Divine Mother as having 'a beauty that was the joy of all the other saints,' and the other personages as 'each distinct in splendour and in art.' All that the goldsmiths' art and the beautiful patterning of draperies could achieve is here, and the whole is harmonised in the richest and most glorious colour.

The enthroned Madonna was in most cases the subject of the other works seen in this gallery, and though tied down to the traditional colours of the



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Virgin's robes, it was astonishing how varied was the colour-scheme of each picture. To describe the colour of a beautiful work of art seems as hopeless a task as to try and convey to the mind of the reader a fine passage in a piece of music.

Should it be a clear day, we can leave Duccio's paradisaical vision to obtain a fine view of things terrestrial from the top of the unfinished façade of the projected nave, in an angle of which these galleries are built. The visitor is always well repaid in Siena for the steps he may have to climb to obtain any of the noted views. The mass of brown and red roofs, which here form our immediate foreground, is split in two, further on, by a valley separating the Terzo di Città from that of S. Martino, and these two districts thrust out countrywards till they reach the gates in the encircling walls. The city, which once filled the whole of the walled enclosure, is now mainly reduced to those parts on the higher levels. Thus we see every spur which juts out from the three main hills covered with houses, and the intervening spaces given over to the market-gardener. The country seems all round to be encroaching on the town, and but for the walls we should often not know whether we were in Siena or in its countryside. We can trace here and there a road leading down into the valleys, which formerly ran through a populous quarter, and is only used now to bring up the garden produce. The great plague, which decimated three-quarters of the population, must have attacked those most who lived in the lower parts of the town, for, with the exception of the neighbourhood of the tanneries, few

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houses are now standing in the hollows within the city walls.

The massive walls have, happily, not been allowed to fall into ruin, and we can follow them through the depths of the valleys and up the slopes of the hills, on whose crests they are pierced by the city gates. An undulating country stretches to the south, some villa or homestead is seen on every hill-top, and the blue line of hills on the horizon is dominated by the beautiful outline of Monte Amiato. The churches of S. Agostino and of the Servi are the principal features of the two hills we overlook. To reach the former we may as well descend to the Campo and walk up the Via Giovanni Dupré, named after Siena's noted modern sculptor. It is a picturesque street, with here and there an arch or narrow lane, allowing of a peep into the valley below. As we ascend we get a good view of the Mangia Tower and the back of the municipal buildings, and having passed through the gateway at the top end of the street, we will find on looking back a ready-made picture waiting to be transferred to canvas or paper. I thought I had made a discovery when I first passed this way, and I decided to set up my easel here the very next day. There was only one spot affording some shade from which the view was possible, and on my arrival I found I had been forestalled by two other painters, who also thought they had found an original subject. The place was vacant a couple of days later, and I had hardly started working when another discoverer arrived with his traps. This original motive, as I had fondly imagined, turned out to be one of the

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hackneyed subjects painted oftener than any other in Siena. It may, however, be as new to most of my readers as it was to me on my first arrival in Siena: I will therefore not withhold it as an illustration to this chapter. The gateway, I may add, is not one of the present entrances to the city, but an outlet through an earlier circling wall, the traces of which are now mostly lost.

The church of S. Agostino is within a hundred yards from here; it is an ancient building, as may be seen from its exterior, but completely remodelled inside during the eighteenth century, which is unfortunately the case in innumerable churches in Italy. It is not, however, for its architecture that we visit S. Agostino. A late work by Perugino is over an altar on the right, representing the Crucifixion; it has many beautiful qualities, but there are few painters whose reputation would have gained more than Perugino's had his later work never survived. Beautiful as they usually are, they, nevertheless, suggest the workshop to a painful degree.

The Piccolomini chapel is what we come for, both to see Sodoma's 'Adoration of the Magi,' and Matteo di Giovanni's 'Massacre of the Innocents.' The former is a very full composition, rather too crowded in the foreground, but full of beauty, and full of strongly characterised personages, whereas in the latter picture Matteo seems to have surpassed himself in crowding a canvas with ungainly people. The Herod might have posed for a *croque-mitaine* or any other bogey to frighten children; and his myrmidons, who are engaged

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in a wholesale baby slaughter, are equally ugly. Yet in spite of this, as well as the unpleasant subject treated, one will return with pleasure to this picture many times, while the faultless drawing and beautiful types in the Sodoma soon cease to stir up one's interest. It is not entirely owing to Matteo's colour being finer than that of his rival, but possibly to a more serious intention which we feel in his work in spite of the grotesque treatment of his types.

A triptych in the choir by Simone Martini represents the Blessed Agostino (a thirteenth-century saint, not to be confused with our St. Augustine), and some incidents in his life. It is a beautiful example of the great epoch of Sienese art.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE ARCHIVES OF SIENA AND OF S. MARIA DI PROVENZANO AND OTHER MATTERS

*‘Siena l’amoroso madre di dolcezza.’*

THE Archives of Siena are preserved in one of her grandest old palaces, and every facility is given to any one wishing to study them. The custodian is an old pensioned officer, a disabled veteran of the wars preceding the Unification of Italy. The arrangement of the archives is a good deal due to him, and when he finds a visitor who appreciates the treasures in his charge, he becomes, for the time being, his guide, philosopher, and friend.

We find documents dating back to the earlier half of the eighth century. These are imperial diplomas with the seals and monograms of nearly every ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, from the beginning of the ninth to the middle of the fifteenth centuries. We find a letter from Constantinople, dated September 22nd, 1399, and signed by the Emperor Paleologus, urging the commune of Siena to send pecuniary help. Maximilian, King of the Romans, writes in 1497, expressing his displeasure at the treatment the Sieneſe received from the Florentines; and a peremptory letter from Charles v. warns the Sieneſe from giving any assistance, either in men or money, to the cause of the King of France,

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Francis I. We find the dual signature of Ferdinand and Isabella to a despatch brought by their ambassadors to the Signory of Siena, and also one written in Spanish and signed by Philip II. This is only choosing a few from the large number displayed and carefully catalogued.

There is a long series of papal bulls and other documents signed by different Popes, as well as original letters from the saints, Bernardino, Carlo Barromeo, and Francis of Sales. Amongst the former we find one written by Pius II. in his own hand, exhorting the people of Siena to admit the nobles to their government. So great was the fear of the Sienese of being dominated by the nobility, that cases are recorded of members of the leading houses being elected by the people on condition of their foregoing their rank and becoming members of the *populo minuto*.

A letter is here from one who would have doubtless now been in the catalogue of saints had he not become a Protestant. This is the Frate Bernardino, surnamed Ochino from his being born in the ward of the Goose. He was one of the most eloquent preachers in Italy, and became the General of the Franciscan order. Charles V. is stated to have said that 'his words could move stones to tears,' and so great was the audience when he preached in Siena that no smaller space than the Campo was large enough to accommodate it. On joining the Reformation, he escaped death by flight, while his fellow-worker and disciple Aonio Palearo, the author of *Il beneficio di Cristo*, was condemned as a heretic, and died for his faith. Ochino found refuge

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for a while in England, and was given a prebend in Canterbury Cathedral ; but he had to fly the country at the accession of Queen Mary and seek refuge in Switzerland. Falling out with the Calvinists, he had to fly once more, and we next hear of him in Poland ; and being as little wanted there as in the countries he had left, he fled to Moravia, where he died in 1564.

A bull of Nicholas v. proclaims the canonisation of San Bernardino, and another from Pius II. to his fellow-citizens proclaims that of Catherine Benincasa.

In a beautifully wrought frame we see the authentic will and testament of Boccaccio ; and students of Dante may spend days here in studying the large collection of documents illustrating his Divine Comedy.

A letter from the gallant French general, Blaise de Monluc, refers to the last stand made by the Sienese Republic against the forces of Cosimo di Medici. It is dated from Montalcino, March 23rd, 1557. A second letter from the same place, of two years later, informs the Sienese that the arms of the Medici had replaced those of the Republic.

Amongst the documents of the artists in Siena we find one dated September 29, 1266, which is an agreement between Frate Melano, master mason of the Duomo, and Maestro Niccolò Pisano, relative to the marble pulpit, and also a receipt given by the sculptor when he had completed the work. The commission to Duccio di Buoninsegna to paint his great altar-piece (July 21, 1267) cannot fail to interest the students of that master ; and there is an agreement



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commissioning Giacomo della Quercia to sculpt the Fonte Gaia (January 22, 1408), and a receipt given by the artist for the sum he received eleven years later.

Should we wish to see the original letters dictated by S. Catherine, we must go to the Communal Library, which adjoins the Galleria delle belle Arti ; but a great deal of correspondence referring to her can be seen in this erstwhile palace of the Piccolomini.

The Museum of the State Archives is possibly even more interesting than what we have seen. It contains the painted covers of the Treasury Register of the Republic of Siena, known as the *Libri della Biccherna e della Gabella*. The first one is dated 1258, and is the work of a certain Bartolomeo. It depicts Frate Ugo, a monk of the Abbey of San Galgano, who at that time was the 'Camarlingo del Comune.' He is seated at a desk, and is regulating the accounts kept in the register of which this is the cover. The following ones are mostly decorated with the arms of the four Proveditori, the officials who presided over the finances of the Republic, and some have portraits of the Camarlinghi who succeeded to Ugo. Many of these are gems of colour and beautiful examples of thirteenth-century illumination. When we come to the quattrocento we find one painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, an allegory of the Good Government, reminiscent of his great fresco in the Communal Palace. The authorship of a great number is doubtful, but in every case the best men of the time were induced to ornament these covers. The subjects are often



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miracles performed by Sieneſe ſaints or events connected with the governing families.

The *tavolette* become leſs decorative in the ſixteenth century, but more intereſting as to ſubject, for they record the ſtirring events preceding the fall of the Republic; and one of them, dated 1561, portrays the ſolemn entry of Duke Coſimo into Siena.

After the Republic was abſorbed into the grand Duchy of Tuscany, the intereſt of the ſubjects lies mainly in the topical views of the city and the heraldic arms of its leading families. The beauty of the colouring is gone and the richness of the deſign tends to vulgarity.

I feel ever grateful to the good cuſtodian for the amount of information he gave me, and the numerous thrilling events he deſcribed to me, of the wars in which he himſelf fought.

The Palazzo Piccolomini is a noble example of a palatial mid-fifteenth-century ſtructure. It was deſigned by Paolo Porrini for the nephews of Pius II., and it remained in that family until the middle of laſt century, when it was acquired by the Government. Its official name is now ‘Il Palazzo del Governo,’ but family names die hard in Italy, and eſpecially in Siena. The archives were deposited here in 1856, and collated by Profeſſor Francesco Bonaini; and to give ſome idea of the magnitude of this collection, it was neceſſary to aſſign fifty-eight rooms of this vaſt palace to houſe the documents. What we have ſeen is only that which is placed in the ‘Sala della Moſtra’ or exhibition hall and in the adjoining muſeum. Some attempt had been

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made in the eighteenth century to put in order the archives which had been stored in some garrets, and this did more harm than good, for it brought them to the notice of Napoleon, with the result that the most precious documents and works of art were carried off to Paris. Happily most of them were sent back to Siena when the other spoils of war were returned to the Italian States, but they, with the bulk of the archives, were treated with neglect till their final housing in the Piccolomini Palace. A great deal was abstracted during that time, and many of the *tavolette* found their way into foreign collections.

The enormous size of the homes of the old Italian nobility is often a cause of wonder to the foreigner. Why should they require fifty or sixty bedrooms when their families are, as a rule, not as large as those of northern countries? It is not from a superfluity of wealth, for richer men in other lands usually built smaller residences. The answer must be sought in the patriarchal manner of living in the Latin countries. Several different establishments, the heads of which mostly bear the same name, are frequently housed under the same roof, and the large reception rooms may serve in common when occasion requires it.

Where the families have been dispersed we may now find only one establishment bearing the family name, while the rest of the palace is let out in apartments to strangers. In some cases a large pension may occupy a wing or a couple of floors of one of these mansions, still leaving plenty of room for the owner and his family.

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The University buildings face the Piccolomini Palace, but there is nothing there to repay a visit. The University of Siena dates back to the twelfth century, though it has only occupied its present seat since 1815.

If we follow the little street at the angle of these buildings we shall descend to the Via Salustio Bandini, and turning to the left we shall pass on our right the house after which the street is named. It is a good example of a fifteenth-century dwelling, and was designed by Francesco di Giorgio. Its chief claim to fame is from its being the birthplace of Salustio Bandini—a man of great science, and the original exponent of free trade. His statue stands in the square leading out of the Via Cavour. A few paces beyond the house, a short turning takes us down to the Piazza di Provenzano, where we see the most conspicuous Renaissance church in Siena, S. Maria di Provenzano. It was erected about 1600 to give honourable shelter to a miracle-working image which, we are told, had been placed there by S. Catherine. The actual spot was on the property of a descendant of the hero of Montaperto, Provenzano Salvani, and when the image became famous for its miraculous powers it was known as La Madonna di Provenzano. It appears that she fell out of favour, and was forgotten after a while; and gradually the neighbourhood of her shrine became the most disreputable part of the city.

When the representative of Charles v. was raising a citadel at Siena under the pretence of shielding her from the rapacity of Florence, the Sieneſe were astute enough to appreciate the menace this was to their liberties, but



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they were powerless to prevent it without the assistance of the French. The hermit Brantano arrived in Siena at that time, and, as was his wont, he called the people to repentance ; he also endeavoured to stir them up to drive the Spanish garrison out of the city. From his queer get-up and wild behaviour, he was not at first taken seriously by either the Sienese or the Spaniards ; but on his rediscovering the neglected image of the Provenzano Madonna, which again began to work miracles, he was treated with reverent awe by the people of Siena, and tolerated by the Spaniards until he became a serious menace to them. He was wont to stand near the foundations of the citadel and address the workmen with the text: 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it,' and raising his voice to a loud wail, he would repeat: 'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain.' One day, however, his annoyance to the Spaniards took a more active form, when, under the impression that a red-coated official was the governor, Don Diego Hurtado, he dropped a huge stone on to him, declaring that he was ordained to rid Siena of the Tyrant.

The religious awe the hermit had inspired saved him from the death penalty, which was commuted to expulsion from Sienese territory. His prophetic words were recalled when shortly afterwards the people, with the aid of the French, drove out the Spaniards ; and the partly erected citadel was rased to the ground.

A garrison of French soldiers took the place of the expelled Spaniards. The people were at first wild with delight, but they realised very shortly that it was only a



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change of masters. The Cardinal of Ferrara with a guard of mercenaries came as the representative of the 'Most Christian' King, and he in his turn built some forts outside the walls to protect the city from the Imperial troops. It was, however, noticed that these forts were so constructed that they could be used as well against the city as against the enemy; and the sudden reappearance of the hermit Brandano, and his fresh prophecies concerning these forts confirmed the suspicions of the Sienese. The prophet was sufficiently vague not to compromise himself, for it was not against the city the guns of the forts were used, but against the combined forces of Charles v. and of the Duke of Florence, during the fifteen months' seige which she sustained before she was absorbed into the dominions of Cosimo di Medici. Mr Edmund Gardner gives us a graphic account of this terrible siege in *The Story of Siena*, to which I would refer my readers.

In times of great stress the people usually resorted to the Madonna for protection; but Siena was now too crushed to make any attempt to regain her freedom, and it may be said of her that the entry of the troops of Cosimo I. in 1554 ended her history. She has lived since then in a state of more or less suspended animation.

A prophecy of Brandano's, referring to the place where he discovered the miracle-working image, was fulfilled forty years later. 'Hither all the most honoured ladies of the nation shall come one day,' was a startling prophecy, seeing that all the houses of ill-fame were in this quarter. True enough, they came—but it was to

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pay homage to the image that had renewed its activities, and we may now see the Madonna di Provenzano in the great church raised in her honour, and recalling the name of Siena's great Tribune.

Dante in his *Purgatorio* alludes to Provenzano Salvani:

‘Colui, che del cammin si poco piglia  
dinanzi a me, Toscana sonò tutta,  
ed ora a pena in Siena senispiglia.’

‘All Tuscany rang with the sound of him who moves so slowly along the way in front of me, and now hardly is a whisper of him in Siena.’ The crushing defeat of the Florentines at Montaperto was mainly due to the action of Provenzano; but the reverses of the Sienese, nine years later, at Colle di Val d’Elsa lost him his life and, for the time being, his reputation.

There is not much in the church to detain one long, the works of art being mostly recent to the building. In a silver tabernacle on the high altar is enclosed the miracle-working image of the Virgin; this, and the portrait of the hermit Brandano in the Sacristy, are what most people come to see.

A walk of five minutes takes us to the monastic church of San Francesco. We pass under an arch, formerly one of the gates of the city, this church and those of S. Agostino and the Servi having been built outside the ancient girdling wall, but brought within the area of the city when the later walls were erected.

With the adjoining ‘Oratorio di S. Bernardino’ it stands on a hill which projects like a bastion into the surrounding valley. The church bears a similarity to

LA SCALLEA DELLE SFINGE, VILLA D'ESTE









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that of San Domenico; but it is of somewhat later date, having been built in the first half of the fourteenth century. It was greatly damaged by fire in the seventeenth, when many of the frescoes were destroyed, as well as a famous picture of S. Helena by Sodoma. Worse even than the fire was the remodelling of the interior in the baroque style of a later century, and of which every vestige was cleared out some twenty years ago. It has recovered from the disease, but is still suffering from the violent remedy. Damaged frescoes of the best period are seen in most of the chapels; but till we examine them closely, they tell as patches on the immaculately smeared stucco of the walls. In some cases they are lighted by stained glass from Munich, calculated to draw a blister on a sensitive eye. Were it not for these incongruities San Francesco would be even more impressive than the church of the rival order of S. Benedict.

A novel entertainment brought me here one evening, with some of my S. Caterina lady boarders. A large sheet was suspended on the south wall of one of the transepts, on to which a young ecclesiastic projected lantern slides illustrating the cathedrals of Italy. With considerable knowledge and great enthusiasm, he pointed out their chief characteristics, and he spoke with the exquisite diction we so seldom find in northern nations. There was only sufficient light in the nave to allow the spectators to reach the improvised auditorium. Its immensity seemed increased, and all we saw of those accursed windows were the severe outlines of the tracery.



## CHAPTER XVI

### SAN BERNARDINO, BELCARO AND ITS ARCHITECT PERUZZI

‘A wondrous power he had in persuading men to lay aside their mortal hatreds,’  
—VESPASIANO DA BISTICCI.

IT is singular that the thirty-three years—the short life of S. Catherine—should have intervened between the death of the Blessed Bernardo and the birth of San Bernardino, who may both be ranked with S. Catherine as the three greatest saints of Tuscany. Bernardino Albizzeschi was born in 1380, and as a young man he became a member of the ‘Disciplinati of the Virgin Mary of the Spedale,’ Friars Minor of the Franciscan Order. During a recurrence of the pestilence in 1400 he and a band of young men and his cousin Tobia attended the plague-stricken who were brought to the ‘Spedale della Scala,’ which to this day is still the chief hospital of Siena. A few years later that institution made over to Bernardino the little chapel of S. Onuphrius, and there he founded the convent known as the Osservanza, and which we see across the valley from the terrace of San Francesco. Adjoining this church is the Oratory of the Company of San Bernardino, which, according to the author of *La Guida Artistica di Siena*, was built



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on the spot where the saint was wont to preach to the populace.

The Oratory is a very complete late fifteenth-century building, and was decorated during the early cinquecento by the Sienese artists of that time,

‘Turning the small dark Oratory  
To Siena’s Art-Laboratory,’

as Browning puts it in his ‘Pacchiarotto.’

The two frescoes by Sodoma are not up to his highest standard, but those by his contemporaries, Beccafumi and Girolamo del Pacchia, are possibly the best work they have done. If the art we see here compares badly with that of the earlier schools, it has, anyhow, the advantage of being seen in the place for which it was intended, and very much in the condition in which these artists left it. As pure decoration, it is in perfect keeping with its surroundings.

Besides being reminded of San Bernardino by his sacred monogram, I.H.S., seen in every street in Siena, the convent of the Osservanza stands conspicuous on the *Capriolo* hill beyond the Ovile gate. Although it was erected by the saint in 1423, that which we mostly see is due to Pandolfo Petrucci, who commissioned Giacomo Cozzarelli to enlarge it to its present proportions. Whether we approach it from the high-road, or whether we take a short cut by crossing the valley, the convent, surmounted by a beautiful campanile, and partly hid by stately cypress-trees, forms a picturesque grouping on the crest of the hill.

I was admitted by a young Capuchin monk who, as far as I could see, was the only occupant of these

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spacious buildings. He seemed pleased to hear the sound of his own voice and that of a fellow-being, and with a sense that I was not wasting his time, I passed a most enjoyable afternoon in his company. With as little pride of earthly things as seemed left in the poor young man, he informed me that four monks of his order had built the church from Cozzarelli's designs. That same architect had been engaged by Pandolfo to construct his sumptuous palace near the Duomo known as 'Il Palazzo del Magnifico'; and here, close to the mortal remains of the saintly peace-maker, the turbulent Tyrant of Siena elected to construct his own mausoleum.

Pandolfo was withal a man of taste, for instead of decorating the church with the effete works of the Sienese of his day, he employed Andrea della Robbia and his school to furnish some of the altars with their beautiful ware, and over the others we find good examples of the earlier painters. 'La Madonna delle Gracie,' by Sano di Pietro, over the altar of the first chapel on the left, would alone be worth coming here to see. Whether it be finer than those in the room allotted to his work at the Belle Arte, it may be hard to say; but how much more can we not appreciate the beauty of that artist's work when it sanctifies the altar it adorns?

A masterpiece of Andrea della Robbia is in the second chapel. It represents the Coronation of the Virgin, and in its beautiful predella the sculptor gives us the Annunciation, Nativity, and Assumption.

Bas-reliefs of the Della Robbia school, and the

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gem-like colour of Sano di Pietro, decorate many of the chapels of this one-aisled church. The sacristy, in which lie the remains of Pandolfo, contains many beautiful things of the quattrocento and later ; but from the exuberance of objects of art and virtue of that period seen in Tuscany, I find it difficult to single out one for special mention. Descending to the crypt, we see things of less intrinsic beauty, but which attach themselves longer to the memory. The original cell is here in which San Bernardino shut himself up to prepare his stirring sermons ; and amongst the numerous sepulchres in the subterranean passages we see the sarcophagus of Celia Petrucci, once a reigning beauty in the court of 'Il Magnifico.'

The young Capuchin monk pointed out to me the short cut back to Siena through the valley. A pathway led through the modest homesteads. The maize was ripening for the sickle, and the grapes were turning to purple on each pergola.

In a hollow below the Ovale gate is the mediæval fountain called by the same name. It is less visited than Fonte Branda, owing to the latter being near the house of S. Catherine, and extolled by Dante in his *Inferno* ; but it is none the less beautiful. As in the other, the women bring their linen to wash in the large stone trough beneath the vaulting of a massive thirteenth-century colonnade. If we may judge by their laughter and chatter, the lives of these women must be more pleasantly passed than doing piece-work under a corrugated iron roof in the most up-to-date steam laundry. And I don't know that my linen was any



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the worse for the flapping and wringing it got at Fonte Branda in the hollow below our pension.

Proud to think that my shirts were washed in a fountain hallowed by Dante, my courage was not equal to bathing in the Fonte Branda pool. It was popular enough with the tanners who ply their trade in the ward of the Goose ; I could see this from the window of San Domenico from which I painted my view of Siena, the apse of the church being on the edge of a cliff rising sheer above the fountain. An up-to-date bathing establishment had been opened just before I reached Siena, and as that type of luxury is somewhat neglected in the numerous pensions, it supplies—at all events to the visitors—a long-felt want. It is a tastefully designed building on the approach to the Lissa.

During the summer evenings the beauty and fashion of Siena flock to the Lissa to hear the military band, and, later in the season, to attend the theatre or the *cafés-chantants*. We have mentioned the citadel which Don Diego Hurtada began to build, and its destruction by the Sieneese after the French had driven the Spaniards out of Siena. This pleasant park, now known as the Lissa, is the only witness of its existence. A more permanent citadel was, however, constructed by Cosimo I. after his troops had entered Siena, when the Republic was absorbed into the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. If we follow the shady avenue traversing the Lissa, our walk will take us along the ramparts surrounding the Grand Duke's fortress. Having once got Siena, Cosimo was determined to keep it, as is evidenced by this stronghold, known at present as 'La



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Fortezza di S. Barbara.' Except for the trees along the ramparts and shady places on the four bastions, it is little changed since Baldassare Lanci da Urbino designed it in 1561. It was dismantled in 1780 by Leopold, the Grand Duke at that time, and ever since children have trundled their hoops there, and lovers have met.

The fortress overlooks a deep valley, and a long stretch of country to the south; some villas and a large monastery crest the hills in the middle distance; and Belcaro stands conspicuously on a height some two or three miles beyond Fonte Branda gate. There are many things to induce a visitor to walk or drive to Belcaro, the owner kindly allowing him to inspect it. The villa is one of Peruzzi's great achievements, the grounds are a fine example of Italian garden-planning, and he to whom historical associations are dear will find them there; for Belcaro played an important part in the terrible siege which proved fatal to the Sienese Republic.

While the populace were levelling the citadel which first threatened their liberties, Piero Strozzi governed the Republic as Vicar-General of the Most Christian King. An imperial army was advancing from Naples to subdue the Republic, and the Duke of Florence was preparing to wipe off old scores with the assistance of Charles's forces. Strozzi and his French allies made preparations to resist the threatened invasion by strengthening the walls and garrisoning the strongholds in the neighbourhood. The struggle began early in 1554, and in April Belcaro had to surrender

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to Gian Giacomo di Medici, who made it his headquarters during the terrible siege of Siena. Better known as the Marchese di Marignano, Gian Giacomo was the commander-in-chief of the allied forces of Charles v. and of Cosimo I. He was the last of the great condottiere, and he, and Strozzi and Monluc of the opposing forces were the three great personages during the death-struggle of the Republic of Siena.

We were shown some cannon-balls embedded in the walls, but whether these were of the Sieneſe who tried to diſlodge Marignano, or of that general when he reduced the caſtle, hiſtory does not relate. Whatever the intereſts may be of thoſe who viſit the Belcaro, all will unite in admitting that the view from its walls is the chief attraction. The ſumptuous villa had not been built more than twenty years when Marignano occupied it, but the walls enclosing the court are thoſe of a ſtronghold which ſtood here from the earlieſt days of the Republic. They are ſufficiently wide to allow two or three people to walk abreast along their ſummit, and ſhould the day be propitious they will get an enchanting view from three ſides of the ſpacious enclosure. As to a Land of Promise, I looked towards thoſe hills which cut the ſouthern horizon, and I tried to diſtinguiſh Montalcino from Montepulciano and trace the way there through the plains of Buon-convento. Where were Radicofani, Roccaſtrada, and Maſſamaritima? The miſts were riſing from the Maremma, and hill-topped hamlets in the middle diſtance ſeemed as impoſing as the walled towns I vainly ſought. Monte Amiata's graceful outline was at

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first distinguishable, and then it slowly merged into the prevailing tone of the sky.

To the east Siena caught the light of the declining sun ; and we watched its cream and russet lines turn to gold and crimson. We lingered here until the shadows cast by the Volterranean Hills rose slowly from the valley and turned the virgin city to an ashy grey.

The distance is far enough to bring the three hill spurs, on which she stands, into visual focus, and sufficiently near to distinguish her shrines and palaces and follow the contour of her girdle wall. With one exception the city has little changed since Marignano gazed on it from this stronghold. The fortress of S. Barbara was not there, and it did not protrude like a wen from Siena's side till after the destruction of her liberties.

Baldassare Peruzzi was not only the architect of the villa, but was also employed to decorate its interior with frescoes ; unfortunately so little of this work had been preserved that the present owner had them practically repainted—a bold thing to do, and one that has been severely criticised. But we must remember that the patched and plastered walls and ceilings were those of the rooms used by the owner and his family ; and however interesting the remains of the frescoes may have been to students of art, their dilapidated state made the rooms very unsightly ones to live in. It is too much to expect that he should have turned the best rooms of his house into a public museum, and we may be thankful that he did not entirely obliterate them, but employed as skilful a hand as was procurable to



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retrace Peruzzi's design and redecorate the walls according to them. As we now see them, they are beautiful decorations; had we seen them before, they would have told as interesting patches with hardly discernible outlines. Personally I would rather have visited the patches; but visiting patches, and residing with patched walls and broken ceilings, are two very different things.

Ilex-trees, cypresses, and umbrella pines form the dark-green setting to the villa and the old castle walls. We approach the entrance through a drive embowered by the branches of ilex, which have been trained so as to form a sombre canopy. As in most Italian gardens, the effect is gained by a judicious arrangement of ever-green shrubs and sculptured stonework. Shaded walks and running water are more essential during an Italian summer than the sweeping lawns and flower borders which delight us in our northern climate. And at Belcaro, as in most villas of that period, the garden is planned more to enhance the appearance of the house it surrounds than to make it a beautiful thing of itself. Flowers are less of a feature than with us, for it is only possible to have them by constant watering; but the few patches of positive colour, seen near some fountain, gives a gem-like appearance which is lacking where flowers are in greater profusion. A sombre dignity characterises Italian gardens, while ours often err on the side of prettiness.

Some mention has been made in these pages of the principal characters who contributed to the greatness of Siena, and before we leave that city a few words concerning her greatest architect may not be out of



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place. Baldassare da Siena, as Peruzzi is often called, was born in 1481, his father being a weaver. Vasari informs us that during his youth he frequented the workshops of goldsmiths and others who practised the arts of design. 'Wherefore, eventually finding these arts please him, he gave all his attention to drawing, and his father dying at that period, Baldassare devoted himself to the study of painting with so much zeal that in a very short time he made the most extraordinary progress. Copying and imitating the works of the best masters, he yet gave his principal attention to nature and living objects, and thus early acquiring some little gain by his art, he found means to support himself while he aided his mother and sister, pursuing his studies in painting at the same time.' He worked under Pinturicchio, and later on in Rome he fell under the influence of Raphael. His fellow-citizen, the art patron Agostino Chigi, assisted him to carry on his studies, which were as much of architecture as of painting. 'In this vocation,' Vasari tells us, 'emulous of Bramante, Baldassare made extraordinary progress in a very short time, which was afterwards the cause of great honour and profit to him.'

He is perhaps better known as an architect than as a painter, from the fact of his having painted almost entirely in fresco, and of which so large a share has perished. His beautiful altar-piece in S. Maria della Pace at Rome made me look forward to seeing much of his work in his native city, but, alas! in every case I found them either very much restored or hopelessly destroyed. It is also in Rome that we must seek his

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and nearer Siena we caught sight of two or three walled towers which had come down from the middle ages apparently with every turret in repair.' I was so delighted with the place that I spent a long day there to sketch it from the railway track. On closer examination I found the walls in less repair than they appeared to the American writer when he whirled by. But they were all I could wish for—coloured by centuries of weather, and ivy-clad in places. They enclose the whole town, and square towers defend the angles; a second girdle of walls surrounds the castle, now partly fallen into ruin, and used to shelter the cattle and to store the produce of a farm. A massive tower, with its machicolations almost perfect, rises high above the ruins.

As we enter the town by the Siena gate we find that it is almost reduced to the long street which connects that gate with a corresponding one at its further extremity. Between this street and the walls the houses have mostly disappeared, a few farm buildings, olive groves and the vine now occupy their sites. Standing as Staggia does in the fertile plain between Poggibonsi, San Gimignano and Siena, it might well have strong walls to defend it from the greed of its turbulent neighbours, as well as from the Florentine mercenaries, who would plunder it as much while it sided with Florence as when it espoused the cause of Siena. Although Staggia has shrunk to about a third of its original dimensions, as is the case of many Tuscan towns, it is not necessarily a sign of diminished prosperity. Life and property being at present more secure, the owners and cultivators of the contado are enabled to live nearer

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their vineyards instead of within the walls. As we are here on the edge of the Chianti district, the little town has probably never enjoyed greater prosperity than at present. Poggibonsi is only four miles further up the line, and being an important junction, it may have diverted some of the trade from Staggia, but it is doubtful whether it ever had very much.

San Gimignano can be reached from here either by way of Poggibonsi or by taking the road to Colle. We will take the latter, leaving Poggibonsi to be visited on the return journey to Siena. The road rises considerably during the first two miles, and from its highest point we get an extensive view of the Chianti valley—a green stretch of country in spite of the rainless summer. The talk of our driver and of the country folk we meet is of the coming vintage. There is an abundance of grape, and if only some rain would fall to swell the fruit before its final ripening, the 1912 vintage would be a record one. We are pointed out the towns and villages on the hill-tops, and hear about disused convents and ruined castles, which any turn in the road may bring into view.

Colle Alto soon monopolises our attention. It is so called to distinguish it from Colle Basso, which it overlooks, and it has decreased in size and importance with the development of the lower town. Together they are known as Colle di Val d'Elsa, so as not to confuse it with the numerous other towns of that name.

Herr Baedeker tells us that Colle Alto 'contains the palaces of the old, but now greatly impoverished, aristocracy, including the Palazzo Ceccerelli, by Antonio



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Sangallo the younger; the house of the celebrated architect Arnolfo di Cambio; and the cathedral, dating from the thirteenth century, with a façade modernised in bad taste.' We may as well let this suffice us while we see what the Albergo del Buon Soggiorno has to provide us for our lunch. Unless one happens to arrive on a market day, or the usual hour of the mid-day meal, one lunch in these smaller towns may be taken as a sample of nearly all. A noise from the hen roost invariably follows an order for this meal, a few minutes elapse between the despatch of the fowl and its entrance into the stew-pan, and during its preparation we take the keen edge off our appetites with some form of macaroni. While we eat the fowl, less tough than might be anticipated owing to its recent despatch, a frizzling sound from the kitchen prepares us for the omelet. A good supply of what fruit is in season ends the meal. Chianti is of course the wine the traveller who is new to Italy will ask for. One who knows the country better will say nothing, feeling satisfied that he will be brought the best they have, and which is included in the price of the meal.

Colle di Val d'Elsa takes us back to Provenzano Salvani, the hero of Montaperto, for it was here that, nine years after that battle, the Florentines avenged themselves of their former defeat, and the exiled Guelfs of Siena became in the ascendant. 'With Florentine aid,' to quote Mr. Edmund Gardner, 'the Guelf exiles were threatening the Sienese frontier, and Provenzano Salvani, with Count Guido Novello, led a mixed force of Tuscan Ghibellines and Spanish and German mer-



SAN GIMIGNANO OF VAL D'ELSA









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cenaries to attack Colle di Val d'Elsa. Here in June 1269 they were surprised by a smaller force of French cavalry under Guy de Montfort, "routed and rolled back in the bitter paces of flight," the Florentines and Guelf exiles taking ample vengeance for the slaughter of Montaperto. More than a thousand Sienese fell. Provenzano himself, to whom before the battle it had been foretold that his head should be the highest in the field, was taken prisoner, and murdered in cold blood by Cavolino Tolomei, who rode through the host with his head on the point of his lance. Among the Guelf exiles in Colle was a noble lady named Sapia—the wife, it is said, of Ghinibaldo Saracini—who waited in agonised suspense in a tower near the field, declaring that she would hurl herself down from the window if her countrymen were victorious. When she saw them routed, and watched the furious Guelf pursuit, she broke out in a paroxysm of delight recorded by Dante, "crying to God, Henceforth I fear thee no more."

Guy de Montfort, who was then the Vicar of King Charles of France, compelled Siena to take back the exiled Guelfs, and shortly after they in their turn drove out the Ghibellines. Poor Provenzano! 'All Tuscany rang with the sound of him,' to again quote Dante's phrase, 'and now hardly is there a whisper of him in Siena.'

We leave Colle by the high-road to Volterra, and after a couple of miles we branch off to the right. Our way now winds amongst the low-lying hills of the Val d'Elsa, till we strike the high-road which connects Poggibonsi and San Gimignano. The vineyards are

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sparser than in the fertile Val di Chianti, the olive-trees are more in evidence, the spaces between them and between the vines are filled up with crops of maize.

In the distance we see a cluster of towers and grey walls, and we ask our driver what place that can be. 'San Gimignano delle belle Torri,' he answers with a smile at our surprise, for we seem to be going in nearly an opposite direction. At another turning in the road we see Certaldo, but anywhere except in the direction where we felt we might expect it. Our thoughts naturally went to Boccaccio, and I determined to go to Certaldo some time that season, were it only to get a drawing of the poet's house. It is singular that amongst the number of great men who gave lustre to the city of Siena there was no poet of the first rank, for Folgore, whom we cannot compare with his contemporaries Dante and Boccaccio, was only for some time a resident in Siena, San Gimignano being his birthplace.

The Town of the beautiful Towers becomes more visible. What looked like one thick tower is now split by the blue of the sky into four or five separate ones, and after a few more miles up the inclined road we are able to count the thirteen towers which give it its title. There are few sensations more pleasurable, to my thinking, than entering for the first time a historical town made familiar by literature or pictorial presentments, especially if we enter it by one of its gates instead of being shot out of a train at the railway station. The gate of San Giovanni by which we now enter adds to this pleasure, and the long street of the same name is well in

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keeping with the mediæval aspect of the gate and its flanking walls.

Doubts as to which of the two hotels we should stay at had been settled by our loquacious driver. I may here say that my two companions were American ladies, the elder being the aunt of the other, who was making Art her profession. Previous visitors to San Gimignano had recommended the Leon Bianco and had extolled the beauty of the landlady, 'La Bella Raffaella,' as she was usually called, while the writers of two very good guide-books both mentioned the Albergo Centrale. The latter was favoured by my lady friends, while I inclined to the older house, run by the beautiful Raffaella. While we were considering this weighty matter at the S. Catarina, I received an anonymous note from England enclosed in a letter from my publishers, warning me not to go to the Leon Bianco, as it was very inferior to the newer 'Centrale.' On the strength of this the ladies wrote to the latter engaging three rooms, and the answer received was that we could have rooms there if we liked, but that our meals would be served at the Leon Bianco.

Until I sounded our driver, we were mystified as to the meaning of this, and he informed me that the town could not run to two 'Alberghi della prima classe,' and that La Bella Raffaella had bought up the other, which was only now used as a café, with some rooms reserved for guests should the Leon Bianco ever be full up. The coachman smiled when I suggested that this might be the case now. 'You will find room and to spare,' he said, 'and now that these accursed motors can run



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people here from Siena in an hour or two, they take a run round the town and then—whiff! and off they go.’

We drew up at the entrance of the inn, with a white lion rampant swinging over the door. A handsome woman, who had somewhat outlived her reputation for beauty, smilingly welcomed us, and showed us a number of rooms from which we could choose ours, adding that, should we still prefer to sleep at the Centrale, she would conduct us there. Several portraits we saw assured us that we were being received by La Bella Raffaella herself. One, dated twenty years previously, caused her to remark that she now had a daughter as old as when she sat for that portrait.

We chose rooms overlooking the town wall and the valley; and here we spent three delightful weeks, sketching about the town and making a few excursions into its lovely neighbourhood.

The town still fills up most of the space within the circuit of its walls. Its population is just over four thousand, though it is amply large enough to hold four times that number. Many of the houses had probably as many vacant rooms as had our inn at that time. The people are poor, and are likely to remain so unless the town can be made easier of access. Cut off as it is from the railway, its industries have been supplanted by its neighbours nearer the main line of communication. Poor as San Gimignano may be, its poverty is not obtrusive, as it is in Southern Italy. Beggars are few, and from the dress of the people one does not realise their hard struggle to keep up a decent appearance. The men are hard working, and the women are much



THE HOUSE OF THE PROVOST, SAN GIMIGNANO









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in demand as servants in the larger towns. It is a good-looking, sturdy race, and well mannered. The demoralising effects of overcrowding which obtain in growing cities, do not exist in towns where the population is diminishing, and this may tend to the self-respect characterising the people in most of the Tuscan hill towns. Children sometimes beg for *soldi* of the visitors, but that is more the fault of the visitors who encourage it; the Italians themselves highly disapprove of it.

The sights of the town, to which the tourists usually allow two or three hours before they whisk off in their motors, may well keep any one interested in art two or three days, and a painter might here easily find all he wants during a long summer.

The self-respect of the poorer classes is also apparent in those of a higher position, for the old palaces, though mostly unoccupied, are not allowed to fall into ruin by the families whose name they bear. A great deal of money must have been spent of late years in repairs, and these have not been entrusted to ignorant builders, but to good architects, well imbued with the spirit of the mediæval town. Many towers have disappeared, not so much through neglect in modern times, but destroyed during the stormy periods of San Gimignano's history. A chronicler writing as far back as 1355 laments 'the great ruin of the towers, many of which I see destroyed.' The thirteen which happily remain are kept in good repair, and neither the gates nor the walls are allowed to fall into ruin. As these at present serve no utilitarian purpose, their preservation is greatly

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to the credit of the people and the absent property owners. San Gimignano owes also much to the energy and good taste of its lately deceased *Proposto*, Don Ugo Nomi-Pesciolini, who, besides having been the Provost of the ecclesiastical college, was the Government custodian of the monuments. He was a learned archæologist, and his good taste is seen in the excellent restorations of the Prepositura. Had such as he had the custody of San Gimignano's monuments forty years ago, the town would not have lost the Ardinghelli tower, which was taken down rather than defray the cost of its repair.

There are many towns in Central Italy as old, or even older than San Gimignano, that have not retained its mediæval character so exclusively, and the chief reason for this is lucidly explained by Miss Jean Carlyle Graham in *San Gimignano of Val d'Elsa*, which she and Miss Elizabeth Derbishire have lately published.

'How comes it,' she asks, 'that in this little town so many as even twelve towers survive in their integrity? To answer this question fully would be to tell the whole tale of San Gimignano's downfall. If her independent existence had not ended abruptly in the middle of the fourteenth century, she would still have been interesting and beautiful, but she would not have retained that distinctive aspect which enables those who tread her streets to-day to say they look upon the town that Dante saw. Had her free, civic life been prolonged for a century or two, as was that of some of her neighbours, San Gimignano would probably have enlarged her borders and done her best to alter her appearance into a

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vulgar conformity with her neighbours. Renaissance palaces, baroque church façades, would have arisen amidst the simplicity of her mediæval architecture, and her crown of towers might have been entirely removed.'

Siena kept her independence two centuries longer than San Gimignano, and it was during that interval that Siena lost nearly every tower which rose from her private palaces. There was a wholesale destruction of them while Charles v. was raising his citadel to threaten her liberties. Grateful as we may be for the existence of a town as untouched by post-mediæval times as is San Gimignano, nevertheless she ceased to exist as a place of any importance from the year 1353, when she voluntarily yielded herself to Florence. From thence her citizens became Florentine citizens, and her promising sons would naturally flock to the larger city, where they would find more scope for their talents. The works of art in San Gimignano of the following centuries are by other than San Gimignano hands.

The independence of the town and its contado had not been of long duration, for it was not till the end of the twelfth century that it ceased to be subject to Volterra. The countryside suffered much during the little wars between these neighbouring towns ; but San Gimignano herself was less affected by them than by the rivalry of her two leading families, the Ardinghelli and the Salvucci. The former were Guelf and the latter Ghibelline, and from the time the town had freed itself from Volterra until it voluntarily yielded its liberties to Florence, the history of San Gimignano is an almost uninterrupted series of fights between those two



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families. The towers we see were not erected to the glory of God, like the campaniles at Venice, but as a means of offence and defence. Palaces, now left in sole charge of a charwoman, were often then armed fortresses to repel an attack from a nearest neighbour. Yet in spite of the bloodshed and arson which fill the pages of San Gimignano's mediæval history, some of the most beautiful works of art we come here to see were produced during those troublous times.

Let us proceed to the 'Palazzo Comunale,' which was begun in 1288, and first known as the 'Palazzo del Popolo,' a name which was changed to 'Palazzo del Podestà' when Florence sent the San Gimignanese a governor to keep some order within their walls. Its great tower is higher than any other here, and no other was allowed to rise to the same dimensions; and it is said that others previously existing were shortened so as not to compete with this one in importance. The flat tops and somewhat unfinished look of many of the towers is often attributed to this cause. The supposition sounds plausible, but there is in reality not much in it, for we find these flat-topped towers all over Central Italy, where no such restrictions were in force.

A tragic event, which led to the loss of the town's independence, took place on the steps leading to the entrance of the palace. Two brothers, young members of the Ardinghelli family, had been arrested for taking part in a street brawl. A messenger was sent to Florence in hopes of getting their release, and, having obtained this, he hastened to return to San Gimignano; but unfortunately the Elsa was in flood, and the



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messenger was delayed for the night. The brothers in the meantime had made an attempt at escape by throwing a letter from their window calling their partisans to come to their rescue. This letter fell into the hands of the captain of the guard, and he favouring the Salvucci, had the two young men at once beheaded on the steps of this palace. A few hours later the messenger returned with the order for their release.

The Ardinghelli and their partisans were at that time in the minority ; but thirsting for vengeance, they admitted the exiled Guelfs into the town, and taking their adversaries by surprise, they succeeded in driving them without the gates, and sacked and burnt their palaces. Both parties appealed to Florence, under whose protection the San Gimignanesi had already been placed, with the result that Florence sent an armed force to restore order. She also held out promises to the people that if they would become a part of the Florentine Republic their liberties would be granted them. These terms were finally agreed to ; but the ruined citadel which dominates the town remains as a record that Florence, promises or no, intended to keep San Gimignano at all costs.

We will let the above suffice as an example of the lively times the Commune enjoyed during her so-called independence, for in spite of a form of representative government, it was more or less at the mercy of one or the other of the two ruling families.

While Guelf and Ghibelline were fighting their battles in the streets, artists were decorating the walls of the Council Hall. It is on the first floor of the

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palace, and is to San Gimignano what the 'Sala del Mappamondo' is to Siena. The Syndic and Assessors now sit where the Podestà or Capitano del Popolo, and Priors used to hold their councils. A large fresco, similar in subject to Simone Martini's great work at Siena, covers the wall above the vacant seats. It was painted in 1317 by Lippo Memmi shortly after its Sienese prototype had been completed. The two artists were brothers-in-law, and Memmi's work shows a great influence of his gifted relative. In spite of injudicious restorations it is still a very beautiful production, and worthy of the great period of Siena's school of painting. It was much damaged in the following century by two doors being cut into the wall through the lower part of the two extremities of the fresco. Four of the saints are said to have been entirely repainted by Benozzo Gozzoli, and from the character of the faces, the assertion seems well founded.

To this hall came Dante in 1300 as an envoy from Florence to induce San Gimignano to join the Guelf League of Tuscany. An earlier series of frescoes decorated the whole room till Memmi's 'Maestà' was superimposed on a portion of them. Tilting, hunting, and a battle-scene are the subjects represented in the earlier frescoes still remaining; and this is singular in a thirteenth-century hall, for even in secular buildings, the subjects were at that time nearly always of a religious nature. Possibly Dante may have shown his disapproval, but whether he did or not, a few years after his visit similar scenes were covered by Memmi's 'Enthronement

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of the Virgin.' Pages have been written concerning the authorship of these frescoes, and also pointing out their qualities. Miss Jean Carlyle Graham makes out a strong case in favour of Ventura di Gualtieri of Siena being the painter. The panels are decorative and full of spirited action : no small qualities these, but at that I think we may leave them. The action of the horses, and the drawing of the animals might well call forth the praises of the contemporary chronicler ; but an indulgent smile from a modern animal painter would meet the case. We regret that any part of this series should have disappeared, grateful as we may be for Memmi's noble work.

What a subject for a fresco would not the scene be which took place here on the 7th of May 1300 ! The Provost, attended by his *Gonfaloniere* and *Priori* ; the twelve Adjutors, the Proconsul, and the Notaries, the Councillors and Rectors of the Guilds, all assembled here to listen to the message which Messer Dante Alighieri brought from Florence. Relations between the free Commune of San Gimignano and the powerful Republic were much strained at that time, and Florence's illustrious envoy had a hard task to convince his audience that it would be to their advantage to join the Tuscan League. We know that he succeeded ; for in the following year a Florentine, Gherardo de Visdomini, was elected Podestà of the Commune, and shortly after the San Gimignanese were fighting side by side with their new allies against Pistoia.

The third floor of the palace is now the *pinacoteca*. It contains a few pictures taken from suppressed con-



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vents, two or three of which are great works of art. One of Pinturicchio's greatest achievements faces us as we enter ; it is a Madonna in Glory, surrounded by cherubim, with two dignified figures of a Pope and an Abbot kneeling in adoration. A beautiful landscape, with delicately drawn trees, forms the background of this sumptuous altar-piece. It is flanked by two circular pictures representing the Annunciation, by Filippino Lippi. They are early works of that master, and might easily be mistaken for those of Botticelli. A panel by Taddeo di Bartolo portrays St. Gimignano enthroned, with a model of the town, and also depicts the miracles that saint is said to have wrought ; in one he is appearing on the walls, driving back Attila and his hordes.

We descend to the picturesque court with fragments of frescoes and armorial bearings, and from this we are taken into the 'Cappella delle Carceri' to see the fresco by Sodoma. There may be some good work beneath the layers of paint since added. Let us hope that it was not one of his great achievements, and so lessen our disgust at the shocking restorations.

The pleasure of our visit to the Communal Palace was much enhanced by the well-informed custodian who showed us round. Some of the rooms now form a museum, and contain many interesting relics of the town ; amongst these is a revolving urn, something similar to a coffee-roaster, used when the balloting for the Podestà took place.



PORTONE DEI BECCI, SAN GIMIGNANO









## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE COLLEGIATA OF SAN GIMIGNANO, AND THE STORY OF SANTA FINA

‘How can I follow in the footsteps of my Saviour?—how can I most resemble Him?’—*Prayer of S. Fina.*

THE principal church (often erroneously called the Duomo) is the Collegiata. San Gimignano, being in the diocese of the Bishop of Colle, is not a cathedral town, but its *pieve* was raised to the dignity of a collegiate church, or *Propositura* in 1056, and it still has its number of canons and a seminary for divinity students. The *Proposto*, or Provost, is the head of the college and the highest ecclesiastical dignitary of the commune. His house, of which we give an illustration, is in a retired square behind the Communal Palace, and is a beautiful example of mediæval domestic architecture. The exterior of the church is disappointing; simplicity is carried to the extreme—a gable end with a circular window and two rectangular doors. But let us step inside, and we find here an entire interior covered with frescoes, illustrating the Old and New Testaments. It does on a smaller scale in fresco what St. Mark’s at Venice does in mosaic. As far as can be ascertained, these frescoes are the work of Sienese painters of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, with the exception of a

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few painted a century later by Florentines. It is true that the Bible scenes on the walls of the north and south aisles were repainted about 1745, and that we see little more than the compositions of the original artists; and much as we regret this restoration (frankly called repainting in a contemporary document), there are few churches giving us so complete a series of the designs of trecento artists. Work, comparatively untouched and in good preservation, still remains on the west wall, and the fresco of the twelve apostles may almost be ranked in excellence with those of Duccio or Giotto.

Its authorship is much disputed; there is little doubt that it is of earlier date than those of the aisles; but as the whole of this painted Bible took about a century to complete, the fresco may have been the first of the series.

Bartolo di Fredi is reputed to have designed the Old Testament series, finished in 1356, and Barna da Siena the series on the opposite wall illustrating the New. The work of the latter painter ended abruptly in 1380, by his death through a fall from the scaffolding. A tablet on the wall records this event:

Barna da Siena  
Pittore laudatissimo  
Mentre queste parete frescava  
Tutto inteso all'indure faticava  
Stranamente dal palco a terra caduto  
Trovò il fine dei suoi giorni  
L'Anno MCCCCLXXX.

It is a consolation that in spite of the repainting in

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the eighteenth century, the old design was closely followed as well as the colour. The design is the great charm of these early frescoes, the brushwork of the artist being then less of a feature than in later work. We have only to watch the country folk assembled here on a *festa*, to see how the simple way the old painters told their story appeals to those for whom it was meant. The far greater knowledge and more dexterous handling of later artists may appeal more to students of art ; but it was not to show their skill to brother artists that these men of the trecento did their work.

In three parallel series Bartolo gives us the main incidents of the Old Testament story, and the appeal to his contemporaries is all the greater from the personages, the landscape and the buildings being such as the fourteenth-century Tuscan was wont to see. The past lives here so much in the present that, except for a change in the costume, the frescoes tell the story with the same conviction to the twentieth-century San Gimignanese as to his forebears. Noah builds his ark in precisely the same way a modern Tuscan carpenter might do it. The entry of the animals strikes us as comical ; but for us it was not painted. Noah being exposed by his sons during his drunkenness is to our eyes distinctly indecent, but it is not so to the Tuscan peasant who points it out to his children. Maurice Hewlett remarks that 'the Tuscans are unashamed because they are simple, and are modest for the same reason.' Why this lapse of Noah should be so often represented by mediæval painters is hard to explain. Pharaoh and his hosts are trecento warriors, and Tuscan



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fishermen are unconcernedly fishing for dolphins a short distance from the Egyptians' discomfiture. There are many other scenes from the story of Moses, and five frescoes refer to Job.

The series illustrating the New Testament is less naïvely treated, but it, nevertheless, gives the incidents of our Lord's ministry and passion simply enough to awaken the sympathy of a simple people. The panels representing the Resurrection and Ascension were destroyed when the singing gallery was constructed.

Beneath the early fresco of the twelve apostles—by far the greatest work in the church, and which we noticed as being on the west wall,—is a large fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli, painted in 1464. The subject is the martyrdom of St. Sebastian. It shows a far greater knowledge of the painter's art than is seen in the earlier work; but great artist as was Benozzo, I think most people would prefer to see on this wall space the fresco which this present one has covered. It is true that it is below the standard of Benozzo's excellence, but even were it of his best, it would still clash with the religious sentiment of the trecento frescoes.

Florentine soldiers seem to be practising archery at a very short range, and the saint, stuck all over with arrows, affects one as little as the sight of a well-provided pin-cushion. With Benozzo's superbly decorated chapel of the Ricardi Palace still fresh in one's memory, it is with surprise that one feels how soulless his work here appears.

The chapel of S. Fina fills the south transept. Here we are in full Renaissance, and the best of its



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kind ; designed by Giuliana da Maiano, it makes a harmonious setting to the altar, sculptured by his gifted brother Benedetto. The Virgin and Child with two adoring angels above the reredos is extremely beautiful. I decided to make a sketch of it for the title-page of this book, and only abandoned it after seeing a similar subject by the same artist at S. Agostino, that even surpasses it. The walls and ceiling are covered with frescoes, and here they do not clash with the early work, for everything is in harmony in this chapel. We may feel more concerned with the beauty of the execution than with its religious intent, but the latter is certainly not entirely absent.

My friends and I came here during a festival of S. Fina, held on the first Sunday in August. The grating was removed from beneath the altar, and the body of the saint was exposed to the worshippers. A sermon was preached in the evening, extolling her virtues and dilating on the miracles she performed. Let us hope that none present may encourage their children to practise some of the so-called virtues for which the poor little saint is held in veneration.

Fina d'Ciardi was born in 1238 ; she lost her father in her early childhood, when she was obliged to assist her mother to earn their livelihood, but at the age of ten she became helpless owing to a disease of the spine. Like St. Catherine, a religious enthusiasm was early manifested, and being unable to lead an active life, she 'offered herself,' writes her biographer, 'as a perfect holocaust to God.' She chose to lie on an oak plank, which we are told was so narrow that a change of

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position was not possible. And here she lay for five years, 'her putrifying flesh clinging to the board.' While describing her sweet disposition and saintly qualities, her biographer gives us the most revolting incidents of her self-inflicted martyrdom. Eight days before her death St. Gregory appeared to her, and consoled her with the assurance that she would be with him in Paradise on the day of his feast. When the child passed away, the room was miraculously filled with flowers, and (as is told of so many saints) 'a fragrance of Paradise arose from her body.' A certain flower, which we may now see blossoming on the walls of the town, is called the violet of Santa Fina, and we are told that it comes from those which blossomed on her plank. Swinburne alludes to them in the *Relics* :

'Of the breached walls whereon the wallflowers ran  
Called of Saint Fina, breachless now of man,  
Though time with soft feet break them stone by stone,  
Who breaks down hour by hour his own reign's span.'

As touching as the story of this poor child is that of her nurse Bonaventura. Fina lost her mother shortly after she was stricken with her disease, and Bonaventura attended to her during the rest of her days. The poor woman had to beg the bread they ate, and, in consequence of the long hours she spent supporting the head of the suffering child, her arm became paralysed. A miracle, recorded on the marble dorsal of Benedetto's altar, is that of Fina, after her death, placing her hand on the stricken arm of her nurse and healing it. The same subject is treated in fresco, on the left wall of the chapel, by Domenico Ghirlandaio ; and the miraculous

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appearance of St. Gregory, which faces it, is the work of a noted San Gimignano artist, Sebastiano Mainardi, a pupil and brother-in-law of Ghirlandaio.

The five years of Fina's expiation were the stormiest of the blood-stained annals of San Gimignano's history. The Guelfs had risen and expelled the Ghibelline Podestà, Neri degli Uberti, and made themselves masters of the town. A few months after this, the Ghibellines, with the help of their exiled partisans, stormed the place, burnt the houses of their opponents, and massacred those who resisted. The defeated party appealed to the Bishop of Volterra, and with his help a temporary peace was established. The Ghibellines, evidently not satisfied, rose again during the following year, and the fighting in the streets was renewed and continued until San Miniato sent a sufficient force to enable the Guelfs to drive the leading Ghibellines out of the town.

On the feast of St. Gregory, 1253, S. Fina died, and according to her biographer, 'that blessed soul had hardly departed, than the Demons in envy and rage filled the air with such fearful whirlwinds, that poor mortals were struck with horror.' The bells of San Gimignano were rung by invisible Angels to counteract the works of the devil, and the people, becoming aware of the cause of these prodigies, flocked to Fina's abode. The fragrance of Paradise, and the flowers growing from the stone floors bore testimony to the sanctity of their fellow-citizen. 'And when they wished to lift her up from her board, a part of her mortified flesh remained attached to it and straightway turned into flowers.'



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‘Such are the contrasts,’ remarks Mr. Gardner, ‘offered by mediæval life and legends. The town where the streets are still running red with the blood of the citizens, while the remains of houses and palaces are still smoking in their ruin, are visited by beings of another world, and have mystical gates and windows that open out upon the unseen.’

Had St. Francis of Assisi still been living he might have told this child that she was ‘too hard on sister body.’ Contrasting her and others with the active mediæval saints of Tuscany, John Addington Symonds says: ‘Others won the reputation of sanctity by obstinate neglect of all the duties of life and of all the decencies of personal cleanliness. Every little town in Italy could show its saints, like the Santa Fina of whom San Gimignano boasts, a girl who lay for seven years on a back-board till her mortified flesh clung to the wood.’ Whatever we may think of this self-inflicted torture, it resulted, nevertheless, in benefits to the people, which are felt to this very day. Faction fights were for a while set aside, and every one flocked to her shrine; the oblations were sufficient to found an hospital, and in the statutes of the Commune we find that in 1255 (two years after her death) its first governor was appointed. Such was the beginning of the ‘Spedale Riuniti,’ which can at present minister gratuitously to the needs of 130 in-patients. The oak-board which Fina used as a couch is still kept there, and on the anniversary of her death it is brought to the church to be exposed to the worshippers.

This is the true feast of S. Fina; the one we wit-



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nessed in August was, as I was told, *una festa votiva* held annually to commemorate a posthumous miracle the saint performed in 1481, which caused the cessation of the plague then devastating the Commune. Every five years it gives place to a *festa grossa*, when S. Fina's remains are carried round the town in solemn procession; they are raised high above the people to impress them with the five years of her martyrdom. Miss Carlyle Graham, who witnessed a *festa grossa*, writes in her book on San Gimignano that 'in 1905 the crystal coffin in which the body lies was placed on an elevated platform above the high altar of the Collegiata, and the whole populace, man, woman, and child, ascended the wooden ladder to kiss the glass. The urn-bust, which once contained her head, was set on the pulpit, and for long hours the Proposto stood there and held over it each treasure brought to be blessed. Rosaries, books, bundles of clothing, loaves of bread, bottles of wine, even children's favourite toys, all were handed up, and the recipient devoutly kissed his property after it was returned to him, blessed to his use by contact with a relic of his *Verginella*.'

The *festa votiva* we attended was on a smaller scale, though the town was full to overflowing. The procession left the church during the cool of the day, and circulated amongst the streets in that part of the town. The old grey walls and brick palaces made a fine setting for the splashes of colour on banner and vestment; a long double file of little girls in white dresses with white crowns on their heads was the chief attraction. Needless to say that every mother is proud

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to see her little daughter taking part in the procession. When it returned to the church a space near the pulpit was reserved for these little girls, and the story of Santa Fina, which entered largely into the sermon, was especially addressed to them.

The small boys have their turn on the following day, when the cattle-market is held outside the gates. Each one provides himself with a whistle, and while he honours his *Verginella* with his noise, he becomes a great nuisance to every one else.

It was interesting to hear the remarks of the country folk when they walked round the church to follow the story of the painted Bible on its walls. They were very much like that of children pointing out the people they recognise in a picture-book. The childlike simplicity of most of the frescoes never evoked a smile, except in the one of the Annunciation, where, in a room adjoining the scene, is a maid with a distaff listening at a crack in the partition wall—an inquisitiveness which most of the people thought justifiable. Such touches of nature bring these scenes home to most of us. A large fresco, by Taddeo di Bartolo, representing the Last Judgment, is round the central window of the west end, and above the Twelve Apostles. It is not a very interesting variation of that oftentreated subject, but it is better as a work of art than the one depicting Hell, on the adjacent wall. The coarse colouring of the latter may be entirely due to the eighteenth-century restorer, but apart from that it is a disgusting conception, and neither the church nor the people who gaze at it would be the worse for its disappearance.

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The pictures in the choir, usually curtained, are open to the visitors during the *fiesta*. A Madonna and Child, with saints and angels, by Benozzo Gozzoli, is a finer example of that artist than his S. Sebastian in the nave. The 'Coronation of the Virgin,' by Pietro Pollaiuolo is, however, what we come to see. It is a noble picture, although the principal figures are not as fine as the attendant saints, each one a dignified and strongly characterised personage. This picture makes that of Benozzo, next to it, appear a poor work in comparison. There is also an important work here by Tamagni, a San Gimignano artist with a reputation spreading beyond his native place. He went to Rome, where he became a pupil of Raphael, and at a first glance this picture of the Madonna and Child and saints might be taken for one painted by his master.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CONCERNING S. AGOSTINO AND THE WORKS OF BENOZZO GOZZOLI

‘As a story-teller and illustrator he has few rivals, and the frescoes which he painted with such marvellous rapidity are of rare interest.’—JULIA CARTWRIGHT.

THE high place given to Benozzo Gozzoli in the art of the quattrocento is in a measure due to his masterly decoration of the Medici chapel in the Ricardi Palace at Florence, being in a perfect state of preservation—an almost unique case where fresco was the medium of expression. Visitors to San Gimignano, with the Medici chapel fresh in their memories, naturally make a point of seeing that artist's work in the church of S. Agostino even if time should not allow their seeing anything else. A certain disappointment usually follows; but whether the good Frate Domenico Strambi, who commissioned Benozzo to decorate the choir of his church, was equally disappointed is another matter. He saw those frescoes before damp had destroyed what an excess of light had not faded; he saw them also before the so-called restorer had repainted many of them. Judging from the dates, the work here must have followed soon after that in the Ricardi Palace, so there was hardly time for the decline, which some critics attribute to this period of Benozzo's



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art. Happily the restorer confined his work to smearing paint on the draperies and backgrounds, and stayed his hand when he came to the faces of the personages ; and faded and damp-stained as these may be, they are as full of character as in his earlier work.

In seventeen pictures we are given the principal events in the life of St. Augustine as they are recorded in his *Confessions*. Benozzo was more in his element here than when employed on a sacred subject for an altar-piece, and he would probably have been even more so, had his theme been taken from one of the *cento novelle* instead of from the writings of one of the Fathers. He tells the story well, but it is a story of a quattrocento Florentine rather than that of a Numidean Roman of the fourth century. It will not much further our knowledge of the saint and his associates, but it will give us an insight into the life of the painter's own time. We get that more or less from most of the fifteenth-century painters, but seldom from one who is as convincing as Benozzo. That his personages are true Florentines is evident to any one who knows them well, and we see here, in the garb and surroundings of the early Renaissance, people whom we have daily met in the streets of Florence.

In the first of the series Augustine, who is a smartly dressed little Florentine about six years old, is being introduced by his parents to his schoolmaster. The father, possibly a prosperous tradesman from the Borgo S. Croce, and the mother (except for her halo) his worthy mate. The schoolmaster chucks the little fellow affectionately under the chin, a familiarity the

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boy seems to resent. He gets what he resents still more in a second scene introduced into the same picture, where, stripped of his clothes, and mounted on the back of an older boy, Augustine gets his first whipping. We find allusions to this painful proceeding in the *Confessions*. The next fresco is much damaged; its subject is that of Augustine being admitted to the university of Carthage. 'To Carthage I came,' he says in his *Confessions*, 'where there sang all around me in my ears a caldron of unholy loves.' St. Monica praying for her absent son, and his departure for Italy, are the next two subjects; and these are followed by his reception on Italian soil, and a fine composition of Augustine lecturing on philosophy to a group of students in Rome. We next see him on his journey to Milan, a beautiful fresco, reminding us strongly of one in the Ricardi Palace. 'To Milan I came, to Ambrose the bishop, known to all the world as one of the best of men; to him was I unknowingly led, that by him I might knowingly be led to Thee.'

The arrival of Augustine at Milan, and his reception by St. Ambrose, are the first subjects of the second series. In the first he is still a Pagan in spite of his Christian mother; in the second series the prayers of St. Monica have been answered. On the window wall of the chapel we have one of the most beautiful of all these frescoes, where from its position it has faded less than the others and been in consequence less spoilt by the restorer. Were they all in this condition they might compare favourably with those in the Medici chapel. Augustine and his companion Alypius are

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seen in a beautiful garden, to which they had retired to study the Epistles of St. Paul. It is here they are said to have heard the miraculous voices of children crying : *Tolle lege*, 'Take and read.' 'Instantly my countenance altered,' he says in his *Confessions* ; 'I began to think intently whether children were wont in any kind of play to use such words, nor could I remember ever to have heard the like.' 'Eagerly then I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting, for there I had left the volume of the Apostle when I rose thence ; and I seized it, opened, and in silence read that sentence on which my eyes fell : "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying ; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh." Alypius then read to him : "Him that is weak in faith receive."'

The next scene is the baptism of Augustine by St. Ambrose, which took place in the Basilica of the Baptistry at Milan. With him were baptized his friend, Alypius, and his natural son, Adeodatus. This is followed by a beautiful picture representing three different episodes. Aurelius Augustinus is now seen as an aureoled saint ; and, dressed in the habit of a monk, he is the familiar figure of St. Augustine we constantly meet in the churches of Italy. One of the episodes is that of the Child Jesus seated on the sea-shore, and dipping a ladle into the water, while He points out to the saint that he might as well try to empty the sea with a spoon as to solve the mysteries of the Holy Trinity. A basilica and a rocky landscape form a beautiful background.



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The earlier artists would have emphasised this change in the life of a saint by a more spiritual countenance ; to Benozzo the cowl makes the monk, and an aureole is sufficient to distinguish the saint from the sinner. Though a millennium divides the occurrence of the events from the time they were painted, human nature had probably changed very little—anyhow, so thought Benozzo. During half that period, elapsed since the creation of these frescoes, Florentine nature has not changed at all, nor the types of the people depicted.

The next scene takes place at Ostia, whither St. Augustine and his son had accompanied St. Monica on the return journey to Africa. Both for composition and for dramatic incident it is perhaps the most beautiful fresco of the whole series. St. Monica, surrounded by her disciples, sings her *Nunc Dimittis* ; her eyes have seen the salvation of her son, and she is ready to depart. The infant Christ brings her the Last Sacrament, and above, some angels accompany her soul to Paradise.

The four remaining pictures refer to the ministry and death of St. Augustine at Hippo. In an idealic *piazza*, such as Benozzo may have seen in the Florence of his day, a multitude of ecclesiastics and disciples surround the bier of their bishop ;—this is the closing scene of these wondrous frescoes, worthy of the memory of the greatest of the Latin Fathers. Benozzo also commemorates the name of his patron on a scroll, supported by two angels, above one of the scenes which he probably considered the best of the series, namely the ‘ Journey to



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Milan.' It is here stated that Fra Domenico Strambi had, at his own cost, bidden Benozzo Gozzoli to paint here.

On the left wall of the nave is painted the recumbent effigy of the good Frate, and above this San Gimignano, the patron saint of the town, is represented holding converse with the three notable citizens: Mattia Lupi, a San Gimignanese poet who died in 1468; Domenico Mainardi, a distinguished ecclesiastic, and Nello de' Cetti, the jurist, who was his contemporary. It is the best-known work of Sebastiano Mainardi, who with Vincenzo Tamagni are the only known San Gimignanese artists of any eminence—a curious fact, in a town which so liberally patronised art.

A noted altar-piece by Benozzo is on the same wall. It was painted in 1464 as a votive offering on the cessation of the plague of that year. It is again the martyrdom of St. Sebastian, but very differently treated to the one of his in the Collegiata. The saint is draped, and standing on his tomb; the arrows intended for him are caught by angels, in answer to the prayers of the plague-stricken who surround him; and thus we see, for the first time, the young Roman captain clothed, and not bristling with arrows, reminding us of the pin-cushion. Being the protector against plague and pestilence, there is a symbolical meaning in the arrows being diverted from their mark by the angels. We are told that they represent the shafts of the pestilence, which through his intercession are not only diverted from him, but also from the people standing near. Benozzo has, however, failed to make this clear, for without consulting a guide few would

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appreciate his meaning. It is a better picture, allowing for its bad restorations, than his other in the Collegiata ; but here, as elsewhere, we prefer the artist when his subject is not a purely religious one.

There are two interesting frescoes in the chapel of S. Giulielmo, attributed, on insufficient grounds, to Bartolo di Fredi. Miss Carlyle Graham, with a greater show of reason, assigns them to Lippo Memmi or his school. They have quite recently been cleared of a coat of whitewash which hid them, and appear to have suffered during that process. The subjects are the birth and death of the Virgin, and, by whomsoever they may have been painted, they belong to the best period of Sienese art.

A young man, who acted as the custodian of the church, was busy picking off the whitewash from some lately discovered frescoes in a chapel next to the choir. He had then cleared about a square yard. There was enough to show that it was trecento work, and this fired him with sufficient enthusiasm to undertake such a long and laborious task. Bit by bit the flakes of lime have to be lifted off with a pen-knife, great care being taken so as not to injure the colour beneath. He was well content, he told me, if he could clear a square foot per day, 'and I can never tell what precious things a day's work may reveal.' He maintained that the whole church had been covered with frescoes of that period, and that it had been whitewashed after a visitation of the plague. Fortunately in this case they had contented themselves with a wash of lime for a disinfectant, and not, as in the church of S. Rufo at Assisi,

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where the frescoed walls had been covered with plaster after holes had been chipped in the paintings to make the plaster adhere. The young man dared trust no one to assist him in his long and weary task. 'Who knows,' he said, 'what mischief a blunderer might do in a few minutes, and injure a work which is the pride of my life?'

There were probably few churches in Italy whose walls, during the trecento, did not glow with frescoed pictures till the terror of the plague caused their obliteration. It is a wonder that the Collegiata escaped the fate of the others.

Only next in importance to the Benozzo frescoes is the chapel of S. Bartolo, which is at the opposite end of the church. The altar, covering the tomb of the saint, is the work of Benedetto da Maiano and his pupils; it is very similar in style to the altar of S. Fina that we have seen in the Collegiata; but however much we may have admired the sculptured relief above the latter, it is even surpassed here by Benedetto's representation of the Virgin and Child in which the Mother guides the little hand of her Infant to bless the people. I made a sketch of it so as to adapt it as well as I could to the title-page of this book.

I returned several times to S. Agostino, as there is much here of interest besides the objects mentioned. A few more inches were each time cleared of whitewash by the persevering custodian; it will be interesting to see, should I be fortunate enough to once more spend some weeks at San Gimignano, whether the young man's labours have been sufficiently rewarded.



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San Bartolo, who lies buried beneath Maiano's beautiful altar, is, after S. Fina, the most venerated local saint. He may be called the Father Damien of the Middle Ages. His parents were Giovanni Buonpedoni, Count of Mucchio, and his wife Madonna Gentina. Being the first child after twenty years of married life, his mother, like the mother of Samuel, dedicated her longed-for child to the service of God. At an early age he entered a cloister, where he was soon distinguished for his zeal and piety. We hear of him attending the sick at Pisa, and during the last twenty years of his life he was Rector of the leper hospital attached to the church of Cellole, and there he died of the disease which he took from those he attended.

His townsmen built a church in his honour and venerated him as a saint for two centuries before he was canonised, and before Maiano's masterpiece was placed above his tomb.

If San Gimignano can claim fewer artists amongst her sons than can Siena, she can boast of a proportionately larger number of saints. Amongst these was St. Peter Martyr, who was tortured and put to death by one of the Sultans of Morocco, where he had been sent by St. Francis of Assisi. S. Vivaldo was another, but beyond his having lived in a hollow of a chestnut tree, where he was found dead one day, I don't know what claims he had to saintship. San Gimignano also lays claim to St. Catherine, inasmuch as her father, Jacopo Benincasa, was born there. Amongst her *Beati* one was a member of that turbulent family the Salvucci, and two others were Augustinian missionaries who in



PALAZZO NEGRONI, MONTEPULCIANO









## CONCERNINC S. AGOSTINO

the sixteenth century suffered martyrdom at the hands of the Saracens.

S. Agostino and its deserted monastery stands in an outlying part of San Gimignano where the walls jut bastionwise into the valley. Such life and movement as still exist in the centre of the town have long forsaken this end of it. Dust lay thick on the sunburnt grass of the piazza, which a day's rain had turned to green before we journeyed to the little towns capping the spurs of Amiata.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE ROCCA DI MONTESTAFFOLI, AND A VISIT TO VOLTERRA

‘Within this harsh stronghold, beleaguered by the wind, do dwell a stern, rock-faced people.’—MAURICE HEWLETT.

WE have now seen the three principal sights starred in Baedeker, and which no one, however short his visit, should miss. But were this all that San Gimignano had to show, people satiated with art in Florence and Siena might pause before taking a journey here ; for its earliest art is the art of Siena, and that which follows is by the hands of Florentines. It is the town itself which is the great attraction, and with that object in view the long drive up from Poggibonsi is one of sheer delight. From our first glimpse of its walls and towers rising from the olive-tree-covered slopes, to our last look back at San Giovanni’s Gate, as we descended into the *contado*, was an interval of only three weeks, though it seems an existence spent in an age long past. Our inn was a towered palace converted to modern usage, and our landlady may have been a descendant of its mediæval occupants, for she retained the aristocratic mien and courtly manners of that gentry. No trouble seemed too great if it tended to the comfort of her guests. A landlord did exist, but as he was probably employed in some office, the

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management was left here, as in most of these inns, to the wife. It was clean without being Britishly tidy, and we had an abundance of wholesome and well-cooked food, at whatever hour suited us best ; for all these mercies, with the wine of the country thrown in, we were charged four shillings a day. The view from my window was alone worth it.

The 'Leone Bianco,' though in the main street, is on a long spur of the hill which encroaches on the valley to the south ; the Via S. Giovanni runs the whole length of this spur, connecting the gate of that name with the 'Portone dei Becci.' Mediæval as is this part of the town, it is, nevertheless, its most modern quarter, for though well within the thirteenth-century walls, we were outside the earlier girdle which closed in the 'Castel Vecchio,' or 'Il Castello della Selva' as the old town was originally called. The back windows on each side of this street were, therefore, close to the walls which follow the contour of the projecting spur of the hill. The houses intervening were small and on a lower level, and did not impede the view of the walls from my window. From the acute angle to the left where they go to join the gate of S. Giovanni, I could follow them along our strip of hill, and see them spread out westward till they were cut off by the Monte Staffoli. On this eminence stands an old ruined castle which from a distance one would suppose belonged to a much earlier date than the walls, and I naturally took this for the 'Castello Vecchio.' It is in truth the most modern stronghold raised in this Commune. The San Gimignano have kept their walls and gates more or

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less in repair, reminiscent as they are of their erstwhile independence ; but nothing has been spent on the upkeep of the ' Rocca,' the fortress they had to build after their republic was absorbed into that of Florence. It was begun soon after 1353, the year in which San Gimignano signed away her freedom.

Beyond the ' Rocca ' and across the valley, a belt of cypresses marks the boundaries of a Franciscan convent, and beyond that again we see the Pieve di Cellole, where San Bartolo ministered to the lepers, and the farm buildings which have grown out of the *Leprosario*. Prospective walks are one of the pleasures an extensive view affords ; a lane, lost and found in the undulating valley, appears again on the slope of the distant hill, from whose summit a view of Volterra may be anticipated. Should the weather turn cooler, that and many other walks were in store for us. While keeping to the shady places the temperature was ideal, but a long tramp under a midday sun was not yet to be attempted.

We were frequently attracted to the Rocca in the cool of the evening ; the keep is now a little *podere*, the cottage of the man who farms it is built of the debris from the crumbling towers, pigs are styed in the gatehouse, and fowls roost in the guard-room. A stone bench and table had been fixed up on the summit of a bastion tower *per godere la bella vista*, and where, if we were so minded, we could sample the wine pressed on the premises, and the purple figs then ripening on the trees.

The western face of seven or eight towers reflects the last rays of the sun, before he sinks behind the



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Volterrann hills. As each one darkens, several towers unite to one deep purplish mass and tell against the twilit sky as a huge irregular pylon. That of the Prepositura stands alone as if unwilling to group with its shorter and less well-preserved companions. The earliest are stone-built, the later ones of brick, but as they darken against the sky they might all have grown from out of their rock foundation. The warmer-coloured roofs of the *pieve* and some intervening buildings show here and there above the tangled growth covering the walls of the fortress.

The silence is broken by the hoot of an owl ; *kiou* comes the answer from one of the towers—so plaintive and so human that it might be a cry for help from young Rosselino Ardinghelli before his murder on the Prepositura steps. Voices from the past come back with each repetition of the doleful note. Had the bells rung in the belfried tower we should have been prepared to hear that Fina's soul had just left its earthly tenement. A cold shiver down one's back seems at first the result of our ghostly surroundings ; but a voice close by, telling us in plain English that we shall catch our deaths of cold if we stay here any longer, brings us sharply back to the realities of the present day.

The *padrona* hobbles out of her cottage to unbar the *podere* doors which hang from the flanking towers of the gate-house ; she affects surprise at receiving her gratuity, as though the few *soldi* had been too rich a reward for her slight services. A short cut down a steep walled-in lane brings us to the Becci Gate ; and from the solitude of the Rocca we are amidst the towns-

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people who stroll the streets of San Giovanni, or chat with those who take the air seated on the pavement.

The young women walk in pairs or in batches, nodding and exchanging a few words with the men who gather here after the day's work is over, but seldom are they seen walking with their young men, and when that happens their names will have been posted in the list of forthcoming marriages. Their reputation stands high ; for to be a San Gimignano maid is a recommendation when seeking service in the larger towns. The lot of those who eke out a livelihood here may be pleasant enough during the summer months, but there is little to suggest comfort during the winter in any of these wind-swept hill-towns, as I found to my cost at Montalcino later on.

An opportunity to compare San Gimignano with its neighbour Volterra came about unexpectedly, by being asked to join a party in a day's motor trip. As the crow flies, the two towns are only some fifteen miles apart, but are more than double that distance by road. It is necessary to go by the road we came here to within a couple of miles of Colle, and then to take the *strada provinciale* which crosses the Val d'Elsa, and winds its way up the range of hills separating the province of Siena from that of Pisa. While still in sight of San Gimignano, we pass on our left a ruined stronghold called after the same saint. It stands on a hill called Monte della Torre, and was built early in the tenth century by one of the bishops of Volterra, to hold in check the men of the San Gimignano *contado*. We are now in the domain of the old fighting bishops who,

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for two centuries, held their neighbours in subjection. We felt as if we were entering a hostile country. Our driver summed it up as *una brutta paese*, and, compared with the smiling Val d'Elsa, it is a forbidding countryside. But however unattractive it may appear to those who have to work its hungry soil, it is far more a landscape painter's country than the one we had left, let it smile ever so sweetly.

The trailing vines and the ripening cobs of maize filling the spaces between the rows of olive-trees must gladden the eye of the agriculturist, and, however much it may lend itself to descriptive writing, the painter soon learns to avoid it unless he sees it at a distance. The barren and wilder country we now see lends itself much more to pictorial treatment; the hopeless tangle of forms and conflicting shades of green and yellow do not mar the foregrounds of a landscape drawn in bolder lines. The day was not such a one to see this at its best. Not a cloud broke the uniform blue above us, and except where some water reflected the sky, pale brown and grey were the predominant tints. We saw Pomerance and Casole d'Elsa shimmering on the hills they crown, and here and there a convent or homestead rose from the walls of a ruined castle. We passed Spicchiaiola without stopping, for when not moving through the air the sun's rays were oppressive. It is a large roadside village, a bandit's lair to all appearance—in reality, the home of a poor and hard-worked peasantry.

A turn of the road brought us in sight of a hill, or rather a giant mud-heap, flat topped, with a castle jutting over its edge. 'Ecco Volterra,' says the driver,



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with a wag of his head, as much as to say, 'Who wants to come to such a God-forsaken place?' The Government evidently considers it well suited for some of its people, for our ascent was by a well-engineered road, and one of recent making. As we neared the castle, after innumerable turnings, we were struck with its perfect state of repair; and the first people we saw since we passed Spicchiaiola were such as the Government are wont to send here—handcuffed men in charge of carabinieri. They gave us a dull stare as we went by, and had not even a curse left in them for the dust our motor left behind it. The colossal fortress, built in 1343 by Walter de Brienne on walls raised by Etruscan hands, and enlarged by Cosimo Medici to overawe the town, has, since the new order of things, become the provincial prison. 'Sono condannati à perpetuità,' was our driver's only comment on the poor wretches we overtook.

Strangely in contrast to this ancient and yet new-looking citadel, is the woe-begone aspect of the street we entered after passing through the Selci gate. We happened on a market day, so this street was less deserted than the houses appeared to be; we also saw a goodly number of country folk in the piazza, and though the place was busy enough, the people failed to animate the tall and massive buildings which enclose it. They seemed like strangers invading a long-deserted city rather than being of it. The market-place at San Gimignano has older palaces than those we see here, yet they suggest less of a bygone age than does this square at Volterra. The people filed into the cathedral, like bees swarming into an old deserted hive, and those



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who hung about the door of the inn seemed to guard it from invasion rather than to welcome the stranger to its hospitality.

Why should the people here seem more removed from their surroundings than in any other of these old hill-towns? Signs are not lacking to bridge the remote period when Velathri repelled the attacks of the Romans after the rest of Etruria had been subdued. The present Volterra has shrunk to within a tenth of its Etruscan girdle; and within its own mediæval walls half of its habitations have since disappeared. Is it that the old race made its influence more felt here? Possibly so. Its mediæval and early Renaissance structures look heavier than in the other hill-towns; solid as they are in San Gimignano, there is a gracefulness which is absent in Volterra. The townspeople were more stolid, they were in no sense aggressive; but somehow at the inn, as well as in the few shops we entered, there was an absence of welcome, experienced in no other part of Tuscany. It is my belief that of all the Tuscan peoples these have retained more of their Etruscan ancestry, and are in so far removed from the country folk who assembled here on this market day.

The cathedral has an imposing thirteenth-century façade, but like everything here it impresses more by its massiveness than by gracefulness of design. We entered during the celebration of the mass, so were diffident about inspecting all the objects of interest. In the south transept is a carved wooden group of the 'Descent from the Cross' by an unknown sculptor of the thirteenth century. The figures are considerably larger than life;

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they are stiff and archaic and crudely coloured, but from amongst all the graven images I have seen in Italy, I know of none which left a more lasting impression. The realism and skilful handling of later periods is not there, yet this crudely sculpted group presents the scene in the fullness of its tragedy. We were shown various pictures—an Annunciation by Luca Signorelli amongst others—all of which have since slipped my memory. The living picture of the country folk falling prostrate before the Divine Elements moved us more than any of the works of art except that of the unknown sculptor of the 'Descent from the Cross.'

The baptistery is, as in Florence, a circular building standing opposite the façade of the Duomo. This is not the only thing which recalls Florence. The bel-fried tower of the Palazzo dei Priori is very similar to that of the Palazzo Vecchio; we seem also to see the Bargello in one of the palaces here, and even Giotto's campanile is dimly suggested by one here seen in close proximity to the dome of the cathedral. It is a shrunken, decayed and lumpy presentment of things Florentine, to the same extent as Etruscan sarcophagi are to the more refined work of a classic age.

We mounted the steps to the *pinacoteca* in the Palazzo dei Priori, where we were shown pictures ascribed to great artists, but as these were either badly injured or vilely restored we left the place without retaining much recollection of them. The mediæval coats-of-arms, which cover a large part of the palace exterior, interested us more than the contents of its *pinacoteca*.

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Most of our party were in a hurry to get to the Etruscan museum, and after seeing seven rooms filled with cinerary urns, I felt in an equal hurry to get out of it. Perhaps I have lived too long amongst the tombs and temples of Egypt to be startled by their antiquity, and as works of art they do not compare with that of the Egyptians dating centuries earlier. The sarcophagi struck me as uncouth imitations of late Greek or early Roman ones. The urns are mostly made of the alabaster found and still worked here ; they are about three feet in length, and date from the third to the second century B.C. The custodian of the museum enlightened us on many points and seemed pleased to do so, but as there were four hundred of these urns, I suggested meeting the rest of our party later on at the inn. The most enthusiastic Etruscan amongst us had, however, seen urns enough, so we returned to the market-place, and strolled about the streets till it was time to take our midday meal. A room made hotter than the street outside by the number of people in it, a swarm of flies, some tepid and vinegary wine, and a question, 'What have we done to deserve all this?' is all I can recollect of our Volterranean luncheon.

We followed the enthusiastic Etruscan as far as the first bit of shade commanding a fine view, and here we were content to await her return. Without a feeling of envy we watched her pursuing the course of the Etruscan walls in the dust and the pouring rays of the sun. For five miles these walls circumscribe the irregular plateau on which the early city stands. One



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of the gates is still preserved, and serves as an outlet through the mediæval wall raised on the earlier foundations. It is known as the Porta all' Arco, or Porta Etrusca, and is a semicircular arch resting on jambs built of cyclopean blocks of stone; the superstructure is mediæval, as is that of its flanking walls. We re-entered the town by this gate, for, hot as it was, there were still many things we wished to see. A small boy was sent after the Etruscan enthusiast to tell her that we should meet her at 'le Balze,' a sight we were told on no account to miss. As this meant a tramp of nearly two miles, we decided on a route affording some prospects of shade. We kept within the town as far as the gate of S. Francesco. A second small boy, we engaged as a guide, pointed out the house of Daniele Ricciarelli, known as Daniele da Volterra, a famous pupil of Michelangelo, and the one painter, as far as I know, of whom the town can boast. The house is still in the possession of the Ricciarelli family, and both it and the street have little changed since Daniele was born here in 1509.

Near the gate of S. Francesco, and in an angle of the mediæval walls, is a large Franciscan convent; its chapel is adorned with quattrocento frescoes, still in a fair state of preservation. They are by the Florentine, Cieni di Francesco, and represent the life of our Saviour and the legend of the Cross. As a work of art it is not of the highest order, but good enough to make one regret that any of it should be lost.

Outside the gate, we followed the high-road for a mile or more, passing through the straggling village of



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S. Cristoforo. The houses had a poverty-stricken look, and the few people we saw stared at us in dull amazement ; no one begged, and no one did more than to dully acknowledge our greetings. We were affably received by the sisters of S. Chiara, who showed us over their convent, which is now a hostel for very old men ; from the garden we got a grand view of the valley beyond the remains of the Etruscan walls. Further on we arrived at S. Giusto, a hamlet with a church nearly as large as the Duomo, but stripped of everything it may have possessed of interest. Between this church and La Badia, an ancient Camaldusian abbey, is the great rift in the hill, which has broken through the Etruscan wall and brought down several houses, standing here till quite recent times. This landslip is what is now known as 'le Balze.' Part of the Etruscan city covered the spur of the hill we are now on, and which for nearly a mile rose sheer from out the valley. The church and abbey of S. Salvatore are disused owing to their position on this dangerous ground. The rains of a few more winters will probably bring this block of ancient buildings down into the yawning gulf.

Here we rejoined our Etruscan expert, her enthusiasm only slightly abated in spite of her shadeless tramp along the course of the walls. The sun had sufficiently declined to make our position bearable, and from this high point we could enjoy the magnificent view. Between the crests of the rugged hills, south-west of us, we see the blue mists rising from the Maremma with the Tyrrhenean sea on our horizon, the islands of Elba

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and Capraia just discernible in the eye of the sun. Our young guide managed to procure a kettle of boiling water, and our tea here was as pleasant as our lunch had been the reverse.

We left Volterra with mixed feelings, some preferring San Gimignano, others, especially the Etruscan enthusiast, considering it far superior. Being more interested in things mediæval than in things Etruscan, I am glad I chose San Gimignano for a longer stay. The landscape is certainly grander around Volterra, but the town itself makes a poor show from the valley compared with the 'town of the beautiful towers.' Judging from the inn and the people we met it would neither be as pleasant a place for a long sojourn, though I hear that recently a clean and well-organised little pension has been opened.

Queer-shaped clouds broke the smooth surface of the sky as we sped on our return journey. Mists hung about the valleys, and the brownish soil turned to gold where it caught the light of the evening sun. San Gimignano beckoned to us from across the Val d'Elsa, and as we circled round the ridge of the enclosing hills, her towers were seen in a variety of beautiful groupings. She beckons to me still, and I seem while I write to see her sunlit towers through the mists which shroud our Surrey hills.

We have mentioned her saints, her painters, and a few of her ruling citizens, but we cannot leave so poetic a spot without a word about Folgore, her mediæval poet. He was a contemporary of Dante and Boccaccio, and though most of his life was spent in Siena it was

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San Gimignano who gave him birth. His poem most nearly connected with his native place is the one describing the seven days of the week, and which has been translated into English by Rossetti. He sings of the delights each day brings forth, except on the third, when a tumult in the streets of his town has diverted his theme :—

‘To a new world on Tuesday shifts my song,  
Where beat of drum is heard, and trumpet-blast ;  
Where footmen armed and horsemen armed go past,  
And bells say ding to bells that answer dong ;  
Where he the first and after him the throng,  
Armed all of them with coats and hoods of steel,  
Shall see their foes and make their foes to feel,  
And so in wrack and rout drive them along.’

San Gimignano now sleeps peaceably enough on her vine- and olive-clad hill, but the few lines quoted above suggest the days of her making more than do the quiet joys Folgore sings in his other sonnets. Were he not overshadowed by his two great contemporaries, Folgore da San Gimignano would be more read beyond the bounds of Tuscany.



## CHAPTER XXI

### MONTEPULCIANO AND THE VAL DI CHIANA

*‘Un fumicel che nasce in Falterona.’*

WHEN I returned with my two companions to Siena there was a great stir in that dovecot, the *Pensione di S. Caterina*. Twelve young men had just arrived from the American Academy at Rome, with the intention of seeing the August Palio, and of making some studies of Sienese architecture. I, who for so long had been the only man amongst so many ladies, was nowhere now. Fortunately I had kept my room while I was away, or I might have been still more out of it ; for I was told there was hardly a bed disengaged in all Siena, the August Palio attracting more strangers than that of July.

The young men were nearly all architects, or students completing their studies in Rome. Their enthusiasm was exhilarating ; from morn till night they were filling their sketch-books, some going so far as to measure up several of the palaces. As these men are the pick of the future builders of America's streets and monuments, it is curious to speculate in how far the study of Siena's mediæval structures may show its influence in the cities of the New World.

Shortly after the Palio races one of these architects



THE PORCH OF THE PIEVE AT SAN QUIRICO D'ORCIA









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accompanied me to Montepulciano, he preferring to study the Renaissance in that town to the earlier buildings of San Gimignano, which attracted some of his fellow-students.

John Addington Symonds' description of 'this, the lordliest of Tuscan hill-towns'; Mr. Maurice Hewlett's 'Montepulciano, heaped in a pyramid, pearl-grey and red,' the hill-town which 'makes a grander flight into the clouds,' and Mr. Pennell's 'poet's vision of this rock-bound eyrie,' which illustrates the last writer's *Road in Tuscany*, were more than enough to draw me thither. I was also influenced by the more prosaic account given by Herr Baedeker: 'A picturesque town, surrounded by mediæval walls, lies conspicuously on a mountain (2070 ft.).' Both Siena and San Gimignano lie high, but not as high by some hundreds of feet as those which are so modestly bracketed. It was a cool summer as summers go in Tuscany, but hot enough for a town, so well ventilated, to be attractive.

As far as Asciano our route is the same as to Monte Oliveto Maggiore, after which the line takes a sharp bend to the north, and follows the valley of the Ombrone till it reaches Rapolano, an old-world bathing station. The line then leaves this barren valley and winds among the hills which form the water-shed of the Chiana. We pass the village of Buoninsegna, made famous by Duccio of that ilk; Monte S. Savino crests an Umbrian hill and Lucignano hangs on the side of another. As we near the latter when the line takes another turn, its walls, gates and towers invite us to break our journey; we pass it within a couple of miles,

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and are yet more tempted to leave the train at the station of that name. The more distant Fojana della Chiana and Bettolle call to us from their heights, and presently we stop again at the foot of a hill crowned with a town whose buildings now overlap the girdle of its walls. A voice draws out, 'Sinalunga.'

A cream-coloured mass of cattle, outside the town, accounts for the bustle at the station; the ancient Sinus Longus is holding its annual fair close to the spot where Garibaldi in 1867 was captured while marching with his red-shirts to the conquest of Rome.

We are reminded of Siena by a copy of her Mangia Tower rising high above some Sieneese-looking palaces. The place is well worth visiting were it only to see the two altar-pieces of Benvenuto di Giovanni. But were we to stop at every hill-town seen from this line, it would be many days before we should reach our present destination. Torrita, on our near right, is still well confined within its walls; Trequanda and Montefollonica break the sky-line of more distant hills; a homestead hangs to the walls of a ruined stronghold as if fearful of slipping into the valley. 'Ecco Montepulciano,' says a fellow-passenger, who points out a mountain-ridge, broken into lines of pink and cream with a light as of a shining star thrown back from a window pane. The train moves on for another quarter of an hour, but we seem no nearer our destination; we slow down and come to a dead stop, and a voice calls out 'Montepulciano.' Who would have thought it? I had neglected my Baedeker, or I should have been aware that 'the lonely station is six miles from the town (omnibus in one

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and a half hours, meeting nearly every train, fare 2 fr.).’

The porter collected our traps and conducted us to the rear of the station. ‘Abbiamo adesso un automobile,’ he said, and to our surprise a motor-bus was awaiting our arrival. Baedeker’s hour and a half is now reduced to a forty minutes’ run. The town is imposing as we approach it up the well-engineered road. Its walls are higher and form more a part of the rock from which they rise than they do at San Gimignano; but the mass of buildings, which stand on still higher ground within the walls, is only relieved by one stumpy tower. A pepper-box campanile, and a poor imitation of the Signiory Tower at Florence appear after another bend in the road, making with the other a poor show compared with the thirteen towers which break San Gimignano’s sky-line.

After a while we run along a high causeway leading to a black hole in the masonry of the walls—la Porta Farine, the eastern gate of the town. Passing through what is more like a tunnel than a gate we enter a small piazza and stop at the foot of a column bearing the Florentine Marzocco. A small crowd is assembled to meet the motor-bus, although only two people besides ourselves step out of it. A few parcels were handed to some, but apart from the novelty of the conveyance, its chief attraction is its connecting link with a world from which the people are cut off. Our inn, ‘Il Marzocco,’ overlooks the Florentine Lion rampant, after which it is called. It is a large building for the few guests it can put up, but we found to our sorrow that



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the inn does not begin till after two steep flights of stairs have been mounted, and two more, a degree steeper, must be climbed before the bedrooms are reached. These being all disengaged, we could choose what suited us best.

The dust stirred up by our motor had partly obscured the ever-extending view as we rose from the station, and we were hardly prepared for the magnificent outlook from our windows. The extensive Val di Chiana spread out before us, the lakes of Chiusi and Montepulciano lay at the foot of the hill we had climbed, and nearer the horizon Trasemene cut through the base of the Umbrian hills, which seemed suspended in the air, so light and vaporous that they might have moved with the clouds that hung about their tops and partly concealed the yet more delicate Apennine ranges in the far distance. Here was a view to make one rise early, to see the beautiful outlines of these hills and distant mountains more clearly defined against the eastern sky, or return in time to see them diffused in the light of the setting sun.

Our contemplations were cut short by lunch being announced. The view could wait, but our long fast clamoured for its breaking. What we ate, I remember not; but I well remember the huge flask of *vino nobile* set before us—‘a wine which induced the Gauls’ (so the chroniclers tell) ‘to abandon the teeming valley of the Po, to cross the Apennines, and move in battle array against Chiusi.’ Whether it did all that, I can’t say, but the ‘bottled sunshine’ of Montepulciano may yet attract a more peaceable barbarian to pay a second visit to the hospitable Marzocco.



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My companion was only here for a stay of two days, during which several palaces were to be measured up, and much sketching of architectural detail to be done. We did not therefore linger long over the wine and luscious purple figs, but were soon off to see what 'lordly Montepulciano' had to show. As seen from the valley it suggested being built on a high plateau, as is Volterra, with a fairly level space within its walls. This is, however, far from being the case, for there is not a level street in the whole town, and so steep are some that the steps to a palace door would sometimes number four or five at the lower level, and die away into the pavement before stretching to the higher. In some instances the ground floor to a house is two stories above its entrance from the street it backs on to, and the alleys connecting the streets on different levels have in most cases steps to make ascent possible. This must have added very much to the difficulty in designing the façades of some of the Renaissance palaces, their square tops being ten or more feet higher from the pavement at one end than at the other. But Montepulciano employed great architects to build her palaces, and although some of us may prefer the earlier ones in Siena and the mediæval ones at San Gimignano, the Renaissance structures are those which justify the name of 'lordly Montepulciano.'

Few towns in Tuscany fared worse during the Middle Ages ; it was always a bone of contention between the Republics of Florence and Siena, till 1404, when the former remained for nearly a century in undisputed possession. But in 1495 the Montepulciansi,

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profiting by the plight Florence was then in, threw open their gates to the Sienese. What Florence could not take back by force of arms, she shortly regained by treaty, and the Marzocco, or Florentine lion, has replaced the Sienese wolf ever since.

It was during the comparatively peaceful fifteenth century and the first half of the following, that the earlier buildings, destroyed or partly ruined during the troublous times, were replaced by the ones we now see. The narrow and tortuous streets suggest mediæval town-planning, but apart from this nearly all we see dates from the Renaissance. Antonio da Sangallo may be studied here, both for his domestic as well as his ecclesiastical architecture—magnificent structures in both cases, but, to my thinking, his palaces do not suggest homes, nor does one feel the presence of God in his churches. Possibly one must be a born Italian to feel either.

Where Sangallo is perhaps seen at his best is in the walls of the town, which he rebuilt. Not only did they serve to make the town an impregnable fortress, but in many cases they are vast retaining walls to counteract the outward pressure of the huge structures on the higher levels. He has shown himself to be a great artist as well as a great engineer, for these walls, while admirably suiting their purpose, have greatly added to the beauty of the town. Vignola worked here also ; his palazzo Tarugi, near the Duomo, is a truly palatial building, and who cannot admire his fountain, supporting the Florentine lions, and hippogriffs ? The Loggia, now used as a market-place, is also ascribed to Vignola.

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I had plenty of time to study it, as it forms the background of the market scene illustrating an early chapter of this book. A shield, with the Medici pills, is fixed over the central arch ; it is not surmounted by the ducal crown, therefore Vignola must have been a very young man when he designed it, as he was born in 1507, and Allesandro di' Medici was not proclaimed hereditary Duke of Tuscany till 1530. It was that scamp's successor, Cosimo Primo, whose shield we see in every Tuscan town or village, and it is always surmounted by the ducal crown.

The steep street to the Loggia, and the still steeper streets to the right and left of it, are crowded every Thursday morning, when the weekly market is held. The country produce litters the pavement at an early hour, but as the sun increases in power, the vendors and their goods retire into the shade under the arcading. The wealth of fruit and vegetables, and those wondrous red umbrellas of the Verona market-place, are not here ; but there is more positive colour in the dress of the people to relieve the sunlight glare. The Loggia is in the business centre of the town. What this business can be, beyond the Thursday marketing, is hard to say ; I had the place pretty well to myself during the other mornings, and it was not till the cool of the evening that many people strolled the streets.

A main thoroughfare runs the length of the town, which in plan is something like the sole of a boot, the Porta delle Farine and our inn being at the heel end, and the 'Fortezza' at the other. Old names have given place to new : it is now the Via Garibaldi till it takes a



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turn at the Loggia, when it becomes the Via Cavour ; an insignificant end of the street, however, still retains the name of the one man who made his birthplace famous—‘Via del Poliziano.’ Of Angelo Ambrogini, known as Politian, we may have more to say later on.

An immense structure, brand new to all appearance, is on the high ground above this street. Surely this cannot be the old Fortezza! the citadel which during three centuries was in turn held either by the Sienese against the Florentines, or by the latter to repel the attacks of the former; betrayed more than once by one of the Pecora, that brood of tyrants who, when not fighting amongst themselves, were ready to sell their town to the highest bidder. Dismantled and battered about in mediæval times, it was once more reconstructed by Antonio da Sangallo, and then left to nature to clothe its walls and battlements with the mosses and lichens of four more centuries. Alas! it has of late years been completely renovated to serve the purposes of ‘un stabilimento bacologico.’ The cultivation of silk-worms may be better for the town than the housing of mercenary men-at-arms, but why use this historic place when many others might have equally suited the worms? A vast sum of money must have been spent to give the fortress even a flimsy semblance of its former self, and flimsy mediæval fortresses are not what we go to Tuscany to see.

Ascending a road through gardens and waste places from which the present town has shrunk, we pass the Teatro Poliziano, where, to all appearance, rats are now the chief performers, and opposite this building stands,



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on a high retaining wall, the red-brick shell of the Duomo. We enter by a flight of steps the piazza on to which the cathedral fronts. It has been rechristened 'La Piazza Vittorio Emmanuele': an equestrian statue of that monarch does not as yet adorn its centre—a boom in silk-worms, or a record vintage, may some day see its fruition. Meanwhile the grass grows undisturbed between the flag-stones. The Duomo still awaits money and a second Sangallo to give it a façade, but when we enter we are at once aware that a poor eighteenth-century imitator of that architect has remodelled the whole interior. Its clumsy piers and heavy cornices are out of all proportion to their superstructure; that it was built at a cost of much money and labour is all that the architect is able to show.

A bit of fine colour over the high-altar prevented our turning back into the square; it is the only thing we saw to remind us of what this church may have contained before this clumsy architect remodelled its interior. An old man, sweeping the floor, beckoned to us from the chancel, and then conducting us behind the altar he took us up some steps to a platform from whence we could examine the triptych which forms the dorsal. It is a gorgeous work by Taddeo di Bartolo; but profane hands had even here been lately at work regilding and touching up the colour of the framing. A Virgin enthroned, with attendant angels, is the central subject, and saints and martyrs kneeling in adoration fill the two outside panels. Had we seen this in the Gallery at Siena it might not have attracted our attention for long; but here, in this

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wilderness of frigid architecture, it told not only as a gem of colour but as the one thing with any religious vitality.

The fragments of a handsome tomb are placed in different parts of the church. It was erected by Bartolommeo Aragazzi, while yet living, as a future sepulchre for his mortal remains. Michelozzo was the sculptor, and great injustice to his work has been done in not allowing all its component parts to remain where he and his client intended them. The recumbent figure of Aragazzi is fine, though hardly worthy of the praise John Addington Symonds gives to it. Moreover, he attributes it to Donatello—for what reason I cannot imagine. Two bas-reliefs by the same artist are fixed against the piers opposite the sarcophagus, although they formed part of the original monument. They have some fine qualities, but hardly those of the great Florentine sculptor. A frieze, belonging to the same cenotaph, now adorns the altar. This is very beautiful, and there might in this case be some reason for attributing it to the greater master. The two emblematic figures, also by Michelozzo, are fine studies of drapery, and that is all one can say for them.

Aragazzi would long have been forgotten but for this tomb; his contemporaries made fun of him, and likewise of Pope Martin v., whose secretary he became—that same '*Papa Martino non vale un quattrino.*'

The Municipal Palace, in the piazza, is somewhat similar to the Signiory in Florence. Its tower and, as far as I know, all of that type suffer in comparison with the Mangia of Siena. Some altar-pieces

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and pictures taken from various churches have found a prison in one of its rooms.

The mania of every municipality to have its 'Museo,' if not checked, will considerably lessen the pleasures of travel. Many churches that were spoilt in the seventeenth century were often redeemed by works of art of an earlier period, till they were removed to the walls of a museum. Even when they were not of a high order of merit, they gave that touch of colour and sentiment which cheap modern trash is not able to replace. Some Italian critics happily now see this. Signore Bargagli in his *Val di Chiana* laments that the 'Oratorio della Misericordia' and the 'Sala della Pretura' have been deprived of their Robbias (those of Luca and his school), in order to allow a future museum director to fasten them with stucco on to the frigid walls of a yet more frigid room in the museum now in formation.' This work has been done since the above was written. The two beautiful Della Robbia altar-pieces have been stuck side by side on the museum wall. It may save a tourist ten minutes, which it would have cost him to have seen them over the altars they were designed for; but beyond this, what advantage has the town gained?

The gem of the collection is a *presepio* by Benvenuto di Giovanni. I don't know what altar was robbed to bring this here, but I would willingly have gone some distance to have seen it in its original setting. Though very differently treated to the 'Nativity of our Lord,' by Piero della Francesca—one of the glories of our National Gallery—this *presepio* may be compared to



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the work of the great Umbrian, both for its religious sentiment and its delicate colouring. There are a few good portraits, and other pictures of more or less value, but not enough to detain one long in this frigid museum.

Those sufficiently energetic to climb to the top of the tower will be well rewarded. 'The charm of this view,' writes John Addington Symonds, 'is composed of so many different elements, so subtly blent, appealing to so many separate sensibilities—the sense of grandeur, the sense of space, the sense of natural beauty, and the sense of human pathos, that deep internal faculty we call historic sense—that it cannot be defined.' It is not a view to live with, such as we get from a room at our inn, which, framed in by the window, presents a noble composition, but it is a grand panorama with too many conflicting interests for perpetual enjoyment. Siena, thirty miles off, in direct line of vision, is yet near enough to trace the three hills she crowns, and to see once again her zebra-striped campanile and pink Mangia Tower. Due west lies Pienza, dwarfed by Enea Silvio's great palace; on a further height, over the Orcia valley, stretches San Quirico, and Montalcino meets the sky on the long ridge masking the Tyrrhenean sea. North of Trasimene's waters spreads Cortona in a fold of the Umbrian hills, and Chiusi—the Clusium of Lars Porsenna—tells light amongst her olive groves. Cetona is yonder blue mass against the sunlit sky, and 'twixt that and graceful Monte Amiata there towers the rock of Radicofani, 'the eagle's eyrie of a brigand's brood.' A cloud shadow darkens a range of hills, and ruins of a bygone age stand clear against their lighter



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background. 'E una vista splendida,' says the custodian, and humbled by this sight of surpassing magnificence we can only answer 'Davvero, davvero.'

Vignola's handsome palace, built for the Tarugi, and the palace of the Monti form the two other sides of the piazza. The latter palace is the work of Antonio Sangallo the elder; it differs somewhat in style from those of his nephew, but compares well with them. His use of red brick in the upper story is felicitous, and tells as a coloured freize beneath the projecting cornice. The Via Ricci, running parallel to the main street, but on a higher level, connects this square with the 'Gran Sasso,' the rock on which stands the Franciscan church. It has several fine palaces, one of which tempted me to set up my easel the next day, more on account of its colour than its architectural pretensions. It is called the Palazzo Negroni; whether the bust over the door represents a forebear of that family I could never ascertain. I spent several afternoons at my drawing without ever seeing a Negroni cross the threshold. Only once were the green doors unbarred, and instead of a swarthy member of that family stepping into the street, a white cow issued through the portal.

Leaving this palace and its departed glory, we ascend to the piazzetta on the summit of the Sasso. The church, originally dedicated to S. Margherita in Sasso, became later the property of the Franciscans. It has a plain brick exterior with a simple Gothic portal; a pulpit projects from the wall facing the square, and we are told that San Bernardino often preached from it. A low parapet fences

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off the west side of the piazza from the precipice below ; and had the saint preached never so eloquently when a west wind was blowing, I feel sure no one would have remained here to listen. I tried one day to sketch under the lea of the church ; but the wind shifted towards the south, and not only was it impossible to remain here, but as much as I could do to cross the square. The veneration in which San Bernardino is held may have prevented the Montepulcianesi from altering this side of the church ; would that they had also left the interior alone ! This, like every other church in the town, has been remodelled during the debased period of the Renaissance.

We must descend into the valley to see a church which remains in every respect as its architect left it. It is considered one of the most perfect examples of mid-Renaissance, and the *capo-lavoro* of Antonio di Sangallo. Erected in 1518, to the glory of God and in memory of San Biagio, we are more impressed, when we see it, by the glory of its architect than by anything else ; and as for San Biagio, there is nothing to remind us of him, except some badly painted miracles he is said to have performed. The church is a marvellous bit of construction, its proportions are perfect, none of the sham ornamentation of later periods mar its simplicity, and yet it leaves one cold. The presence of God is not felt, nor does it awake any human sympathies. I went there a second time, when the annual festival was held : the church was crowded with townspeople and village folk, a large orchestra accompanied the choir, hundreds of candles were lit and clouds of incense

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rose from the altar. It was a pretty sight and the music was well played ; but as for religious emotion, I neither felt any, nor did I detect any trace of it in the congregation or in those serving at the Altar.

The classic revival had so paganised the art of the cinquecento that, but for a few Christian symbols in this church, it might as well have served for the worship of Apollo as for that of the Risen Christ. We do not feel this where the Byzantine basilica has been adapted to Christian worship, in spite of the classic form it retained. It was a case then of conversion, whereas during the cinquecento, whether consciously or not, it was exactly the reverse.

Much more impressive is the manner in which the country folk celebrate the eve of the *festa*—the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin—when every contadino prepares a bonfire that he lights at compline. From our high vantage the extensive valley gleamed with hundreds of beacons, marking every village, castle, and homestead. On the further shore of Trasemene we saw them reflected in her waters ; they shone on every height, and their flames waxed and waned in the hollows below the city walls.

The scholar and poet to whom Montepulciano gave birth is in keeping with the architects who rebuilt her palaces and remodelled her churches. On a modest house in the Via del Poliziano a tablet records that Angelo Ambrogini was born there on the 14th July 1454. He is known to posterity as Poliziano, the Latinised form of his native place, and to us as Politian. His father, a well-known jurist, was assassinated while



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Angelo was still a child, and the widow and family were left in straitened circumstances ; but owing to the boy's early proofs of genius, means were found to send him to Florence, where he was taught by some of the most famous scholars of the time. His translations of the *Iliad* into Latin hexameters brought him to the notice of Lorenzo de' Medici, who took the 'Homeric Youth,' as the lad was called, under his protection. Through his genius and devotion to work he was later recognised as 'The Prince of Italian Scholars.' While still a young man he became professor of Latin and Greek in the University of Florence, to which students flocked from different parts of Europe in order to attend his lectures. Lorenzo gave him a villa at Fiesole, and made him tutor to his two sons, Piero and Giovanni (afterwards Pope Leo x.). This appointment did not last long, as Clarice, the wife of the Magnificent, had good reason to object to her sons being placed under the tutorship of a man of Politian's habits. It did not, however, lessen the friendly intercourse between Lorenzo and his protégé, which lasted until the death of the former in 1492. Politian died two years later, during which time Savonarola was thundering against the humanist tendency of the scholars and the vanities of the age. He was buried at San Marco at Florence, in a grave next to that of his brilliant companion Pico della Mirandola, who died the same year. His epitaph is as follows : 'Politian lies in this grave, the angel who had one head, and what is new, three tongues.' His end contrasts with that of his companion Pico, who, shortly before his death, became a convert to



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Savonarola, and was buried in the habit of a Dominican friar.

I left Montepulciano with less regret than when parting from San Gimignano. It is well worth a visit, and owing to its lofty position, a month in midsummer may well be passed here should it be necessary to pass that season in Italy. But as a painter I would far rather spend that time at San Gimignano, in spite of its being a trifle warmer. The lordly palaces may appeal more to the architect than to the painter, and its unrivalled views lend themselves but little to pictorial treatment. If tempted to take a long walk, there is always a terrible hill to climb on our return.

The two American ladies who were at San Gimignano while I was there joined me at Montepulciano, and we were companions during the trip which I will describe in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XXII

### PIENZA AND SAN QUIRICO D'ORCIA

‘We see in Pienza how the most active-minded and intelligent man of his epoch, the representative genius of Italy in the middle of the fifteenth century, commanding vast wealth and the Pontifical prestige, worked out his whim of city-building.’—JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

BY making an early start we were able to spend several hours at Pienza, and arrive at San Quirico before darkness set in. We left Montepulciano by the gate we entered, starting in the opposite direction to where we were destined. The same carriage road which rises to these high-pitched towns is often the only one leading into the valley. We, however, turned off to the right sooner than I expected, and circling half of the town, we proceeded in a westerly direction. We soon see the last of the Val di Chiana, and enter that of the Orcia. Montefollonico rises like a great hump between the two valleys, and has on its top a completely walled and castellated little town which ‘sweetly torments us with invitation to its own inhospitable home.’ Our road winds along the higher ridges of the valley, through a fairly cultivated country, till within a mile or two of Pienza, when we get on to the *creta*—that ash-grey soil, the despair of the cultivator. We never lost sight of Monte Amiata, with its two volcanic crests and graceful slopes. Montepulciano, as we look back on it, makes a bolder outline against the sky than when seen from

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the Val di Chiana. Radicofani on its inaccessible rock appeals to the imagination more than any of the hill towns brought within the range of vision at every turn of the road. It does not 'sweetly torment us with invitation,' as Emerson puts it, but stands defiant of any save her own 'robber brood.' It harbours no precious works of art; and from some experience of these rock-bound fastnesses, I find that they are often better remembered as seen from below.

A carriage road up to its lofty perch must exist, for in spite of its apparent inaccessibility it was a place of call for travellers from Florence to Rome before the railway diverted its traffic. In *The Idler in Italy* Lady Blessington describes its hospitality. Her diary is dated 3rd July 1823: 'Nothing can be more cheerless and dreary,' she says, 'than the route between Siena and this place, unless it be Radicofani itself, which is as sterile and gloomy a spot as ever traveller was condemned to contemplate. The marks of its volcanic character, scattered around in huge and shapeless masses of rock, and the brown and barren soil of the patches of earth left exposed, give the whole place an air of desolation that weighs down the spirits of those who gaze on it. And well does the inn harmonise with the savage scene around it, for it is wretched beyond description! The very climate here partakes of the bleakness and chilling influence of the landscape; and as, wrapped in an India shawl and thick pelisse, I sit waiting in the comfortless apartment, which not even a pile of blazing wood can warm, I ask if this is indeed Italy?'

When the brilliant countess sat shivering in her

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India shawl and thick pelisse, Radicofani was on the high-road to Rome; but now that it is twenty miles from its nearest railway station, we wonder what depths of misery await the traveller who now seeks the hospitality of its inn.

Pienza is a little town quite by itself. It is the nucleus of a city dumped in the centre of a poverty-stricken village. It must have been poor in mediæval times owing to the nature of the soil surrounding it, though walls and towers were deemed necessary to protect the little it had; but in 1405 it gave birth to Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who as Pope Pius II. not only changed its name of Corsignano to that of Pienza, but endeavoured to convert it into a lordly city. He built himself a vast palace, erected a cathedral, a bishop's palace and another for the Commune, which four buildings enclose the square now known as the Piazza del Duomo. As these all date about 1460, they give us a good idea of a fifteenth-century Italian city in the making. Bernardo Rossellino and Francesco di Giorgio are said to have been the architects; and as the former was a Florentine and the latter a Sienese, we can trace the influence of both cities in the construction.

The Pontiff dying a few years after the completion of his palace, his rechristened birthplace soon lapsed into its former state of poverty; and thus it remained until a few years ago, when Count Piccolomini, a collateral descendant of Pius II., restored the old palace, which he now uses as a summer residence. He is fortunately a man of good taste, and has not only restored the place to its former state, but has also, as far



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as possible, furnished it with genuine furniture of the period. He was fighting for his country in Tripoli at the time of our visit, but we were given leave to go over the palace and grounds. Only some vestiges remain of the old castle in which Enea Silvio was born, most of the material having presumably been used in the structure we now see; and although his palace had been put to vile usage during a long period, there yet remain many relics of the great Pontiff, chief amongst them being a contemporary portrait of him.

A handsome loggia extends along the whole south side of the second story, and commands a magnificent view of the Val d'Orcia. Pienza being on a ridge seventeen hundred feet above sea-level, the view is nearly as extensive as any we got in Montepulciano, and this, as well as the wish to benefit his native village, must have been an inducement to the poet Pontiff to build his summer residence here. To seek protection on the hill-tops was less necessary in the fifteenth century than during the Middle Ages; and, judging from the number of Renaissance villas commanding a glorious prospect, the love of scenery must have been more widely diffused with the Italians than with us, as so many of our great Tudor houses are placed in hollows with a very limited outlook.

It is a wild and desolate valley we overlook, but, seen from this height, it has a grandeur absent in more cultivated areas. The Orcia wriggles and twists amongst the marly wastes as if in a hurry to join the Ombrone in its rapid course to the sea. We are accustomed to see a castle or convent on the hill-tops; but between us and the river we look down on a vast stronghold

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with apparently every tower and battlement in perfect preservation. Why this should have been built here in the plain, exposed to attack from every side, and having no town to defend, seems inexplicable, till we learn that it is not a castle in the true sense, but was originally a barn belonging to the hospital of S. Maria della Scala in Siena, which owned large tracts of land in this district. The corn being garnered here, it became necessary to protect it from marauders; it was then further used as a place of convalescence for the hospital patients, and during the course of the Middle Ages it developed into the vast structure we now see. The rich endowments of the hospital have enabled it to keep the place in a state of repair. The two hill fortresses of Castiglione d'Orcia and Rocca d'Orcia frown at each other on the farther side of the river. Such neighbours were enough to account for the battlemented walls of the Castello di Spedaletto, which first attracted our attention. The undulations of the country carry the eye towards the great feature of the middle distance, and that is the ever-beautiful Monte Amiata.

But for the influence of Count Piccolomini the cathedral would probably have fallen into ruin. This danger is now being averted, and, without the scrapings and redaubing with which the word restoration is too often associated, the structure is being made safe for future generations. It still contains three remarkable pictures by Sienese painters who were contemporaries of Pius II. One is a fine triptych of the Virgin enthroned, with attendant angels, by Vecchietta, a painter I had not sufficiently appreciated until seeing this work of his

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here. There is also a beautiful altar-piece by Sano di Pietro of a similar subject, and our friend Matteo di Giovanni is also represented by an altar-piece, which does not, however, compare favourably with his work in Siena. The cathedral itself is chiefly interesting as an example of the transition from Gothic to the Renaissance.

There is the inevitable museum in the Palazzo Pubblico, containing three altar-pieces which may possibly be replaced in the cathedral when the repairs there are completed. One is by Matteo of the oft represented Virgin enthroned, a distinctly fine work ; and the two others are by Bartolo di Fredi. The chief treasure is the cope which Thomas Palaeologus presented to Pius II. It dates from the thirteenth century, which is instructive, proving that the earlier work was held in esteem by some men of the Renaissance. The workmanship is German, and, in unfaded colours, it gives us Old and New Testament stories, as well as scenes from the lives of the saints. It is in all probability the finest ecclesiastical vestment in the world. Its history till it was acquired by Palaeologus is unknown ; various versions exist, but were probably all invented after the Eastern potentate had presented it to the Pope of Rome. Enea Silvio's bishop's mitre and crosier are also there, as well as a rare collection of altar requisites. Only second in importance to the marvellous cope are two trecento tapestries, one representing the Crucifixion and the other a biblical scene which I cannot place. The extraordinary thing is their marvellous preservation : the custodian informed us that he remembered



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them, some years back, hanging on a damp wall under a leaking roof, and apparently treated as old rubbish.

Travel in Italy is unique, for, go where you will, there may always be a surprise awaiting you in the most out of the way places. We owe much to Signore Corrado Ricci, who is editing a series of booklets giving the artistic treasures in most parts of his country. They are known as *Italia Artistica*. The one treating of the Val d'Orcia (No. 63 of the series) has two hundred and nine photographic illustrations, and the art, archæology, and history of each place are described by a competent writer. Days might be spent in making long and fruitless excursions, which may now be avoided in all the districts that have appeared in this series. Excellent as is Baedeker's guide, space only allows of its touching the fringe of the wealth of art Italy still possesses.

Apart from the associations with Pius II. and the treasures in the little museum, Pienza hardly came up to my expectations. These palaces and cathedral, handsome as they are, look out of place in a poverty-stricken village. It is like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis—an interesting operation in itself, but unpleasing if it were never completed. It is a place to visit, but hardly one to sojourn in.

San Quirico d'Orcia is within a two-hours' drive from Pienza. Little is seen of it till within a short distance of its walls, except its tall square tower of the Rocca; it reserves its best face to those approaching it from the opposite direction. While we climbed the last hill, the Capuchin gate told dark against the evening sky, yet pale and mysterious in contrast to the dense colour of



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the stately cypresses grouped on its flank. On our way to the inn we passed a huge palace with the Chigi arms and a pope's triple crown emblazoned over the door. Through the broken windows we saw spacious rooms used as storage for any goods that were not worth the stealing, and where the plaster still clung to the ceilings it was covered with pagan deities sprawling amongst clouds. Opposite this derelict palace is a beautiful Lombard church dating from the ninth century, with elaborately carved portals of the trecento. Turning into the main street, our driver, as is their custom, whipped up his horses so as to arrive in dashing style at the inn.

It was a modest-looking hostel, and the landlady and her daughters seemed overawed by the splendour of a two-horse carriage. We were taken up two very steep flights of stairs and shown our rooms. The distinguishing feature of mine was naturally the bed; but this particular bed was so high from the floor that with the help of a chair it would have been an acrobatic feat to have got into it, besides the danger of a bump against the ceiling. The maid, seeing my astonishment, suggested taking three or four mattresses off it, and to this sound suggestion I added that I could do with half a dozen less blankets; but, anxious as we were not to delay our dinner, this operation was deferred for the time being.

There were other mysteries to solve besides the height of my bed, for I heard no complaints from the American ladies that theirs were too close to the ceiling. They were more inclined to murmur when the soup

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bowl and three plates were placed on the dining-room table and the dinner announced. We were too hungry to insist on a table-cloth, and the consequent delay, but we suggested to the maid that the loaf might be placed on a plate instead of on the dusty boards. There was the usual huge flask of red wine, and a carafe of water for any one foolhardy enough to venture on the latter. While awaiting this meal, I had watched the townspeople getting their water from the well in the little square we overlooked, and owing to the long drought the supply had nearly reached its limit. Various articles besides mud came up in the buckets—a long-lost hat amongst other things. We were, however, relieved to hear that bottled mineral water was procurable, and sharp appetites compensated in a great degree for the roughness of the meal.

We had been warned not to go to the old-established 'Due Lepri,' and if that were even more primitive, it is difficult to reconcile John Addington Symonds's account: 'We put up at the sign of the "Two Hares,"' he says in his *New Italian Sketches*, 'where a notable housewife gave us a dinner of all we could desire.' I put some leading questions to the maid, and gathered that the people who kept the 'Due Lepri' were old and ill, and it was not possible now for 'Signori' to put up there. With the fall of the 'Lepri' rose the inn we were in. I cannot recall its name, but from what I gathered, it had till recently been nothing more than a workman's *osteria*, on to which the two upper stories had been incorporated. The landlady ran the *osteria*, and the two maids were left in charge of the floors

## PIENZA AND SAN QUIRICO D'ORCIA

'pei Signori.' They were two strapping wenches, though one was only fifteen and the other but a year older. As they seemed most anxious to learn what the requirements of Signori might be, the inn may some day rise to the heights of the once famous 'Two Hares.'

We had written to engage beds for three people, and no doubt the three of us were destined to share the one room, which may have had bedding for three people. The excessive height of the one in my room was on account of all the new bedding having been temporarily piled on to it.

It was pleasant to know that we were the first to use the sheets, although the next comer might find them more pliable than we did—they could be bent but not folded.

When I ordered coffee on the following morning I was taken too literally; a small cup of black coffee is hardly one's idea of a breakfast even in Italy. I called for some milk, and a pailful was fetched up from the lower regions. I asked for bread, greatly to the maid's astonishment, and even that did not appear to satisfy me. Butter was the next thing asked for, besides a knife to spread it and a plate to substitute the paper on which the butter was brought. The poor girl had now had as much training as she could take in in one morning, and I trusted to the ladies to give her her next. It is unfortunate that the inn should not have been better, as there is much in San Quirico to keep an artist employed.

Our rooms overlooked a picturesque old-world square: the well in the centre was more beautiful than



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what had been drawn up from it. A stone shield with the Chigi arms and cardinal's hat decorates a large and gloomy house on our right ; it has iron gates admitting to a formal garden, the plan of which could just be traced amongst the overgrown shrubs. Some houses that had seen better days, and a little church, completed the square.

The Pieve, or parish church, is the chief attraction of San Quirico. We started to draw one of its portals, which serves to illustrate this chapter ; it is not nearly as important as the one at the west entrance, but a more characteristic example of Lombardesque Gothic. The whole exterior of the church is very interesting, and its Renaissance campanile does not jar with the earlier work beneath it. How this Lombard style of architecture found its way as far south as this has never been satisfactorily explained. So many old churches have been remodelled internally that one is generally prepared on entering to find it out of keeping with the exterior, but here the discrepancy is shocking. The very worst baroque of the eighteenth century hides every vestige of the thirteenth. There were holes made in this new casing to show some of the work it hides ; and, as soon as funds allow, the whole of it is to be taken out and the church restored to its original form. There is a beautiful altar-piece by Sano di Pietro and a doubtful Sodoma in the sacristy.

With a little more training of the maids at the inn, we were enabled to spend a fortnight at San Quirico in a semblance of civilisation. There are delightful walks round the walls, and some very interesting places



## PIENZA AND SAN QUIRICO D'ORCIA

to visit within an easy drive. Castiglione d'Orcia and Rocca d'Orcia, the two rock-bound castles we saw from the palace at Pienza, are only five miles south of San Quirico. We take the road to Radicofani, the old high-road from Florence to Rome, and after the river is crossed we leave that road and wind up the one to the right till we pass into Rocca d'Orcia through one of its crumbling gates. The village spreads over the ridge of volcanic rock. The Pieve should be entered for the sake of the Cimabuesque fresco it contains. A colossal figure of the Blessed Virgin with outspread arms enfolds in her cloak the saints of the Church ; the fresco is in bad repair, but sufficient remains to show its impressive design. High above the village, the ruined castle seems a part of the rock on which it stands. Till we approach it, it is hard to distinguish where Nature's work ended and that of man began. One of its massive towers still defies time and weather, and from its battlements we survey the greater part of Southern Tuscany. Within half a mile stands Castiglione d'Orcia, its castle crowning a cone of rock rising high above the houses. We can visit this second eagle's eyrie on our return journey. A serpentine road descends to the intervening valley and zigzags up to Castiglione's gate. There are two or three early Sienese pictures in the Pieve, but hardly of sufficient interest to compensate the climb up the hill.

We must be prepared for a certain disillusion on entering many of the lesser hill towns. Little of them is seen from the valleys except their walls and gates and towers ; and, absurd as it may be, we are apt to

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people them in our imagination with other folk than those we meet in the more prosaic towns of the plain. The people are different in more ways than we would expect ; but we see people's clothes sooner than we see into their characters—a pair of trousers and a pot hat come as a shock when we pass under the portcullis of one of their mediæval gates. Those who till the soil partake of the colour of the tilth, and they and their cattle are still as much in keeping with their surroundings as in the days of yore ; but, once within the gates, the commonplace of the twentieth century begins to encroach on the romance of mediæval times.

Montalcino beckoned to us from its airy seat on the lofty ridge between us and the Maremma. Whether in full sunlight against a thunder-cloud or darkly outlined against the sunset sky, it sweetly tormented us with invitation ; but not to an inhospitable home. The praises of its inns have been sung by Mr. Edward Hutton in his delightful book on Southern Tuscany, and we longed for its hospitality after a fortnight of San Quirico fare. We were obliged to write to the inn to send over a carriage, as there was none in San Quirico to take us and our luggage that distance. In a direct line the two towns are not ten miles apart, but nearer thirty by the only carriage road.

San Quirico looked never so fair as when seen from the western incline to the valley. For a while our road was through a well-cultivated country, and then came that wrinkled marly land given up to anything that can find some sustenance in its sterility. It

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improved as we got into the low-lying ground near the Asso, a stream which now trickled down from the *balze* near Monte Oliveto, but will join the Orcia with a rush when once the drought is broken.

We cross the railway soon after crossing the river, and we pass through the village of Torriniere, a station on the Assiano and Grosseto line. For a mile or two road, railway and river follow the same course through a fertile tract of land, and then, parting company, begins the long climb up to the high ridge which Montalcino strides.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### MONTALCINO

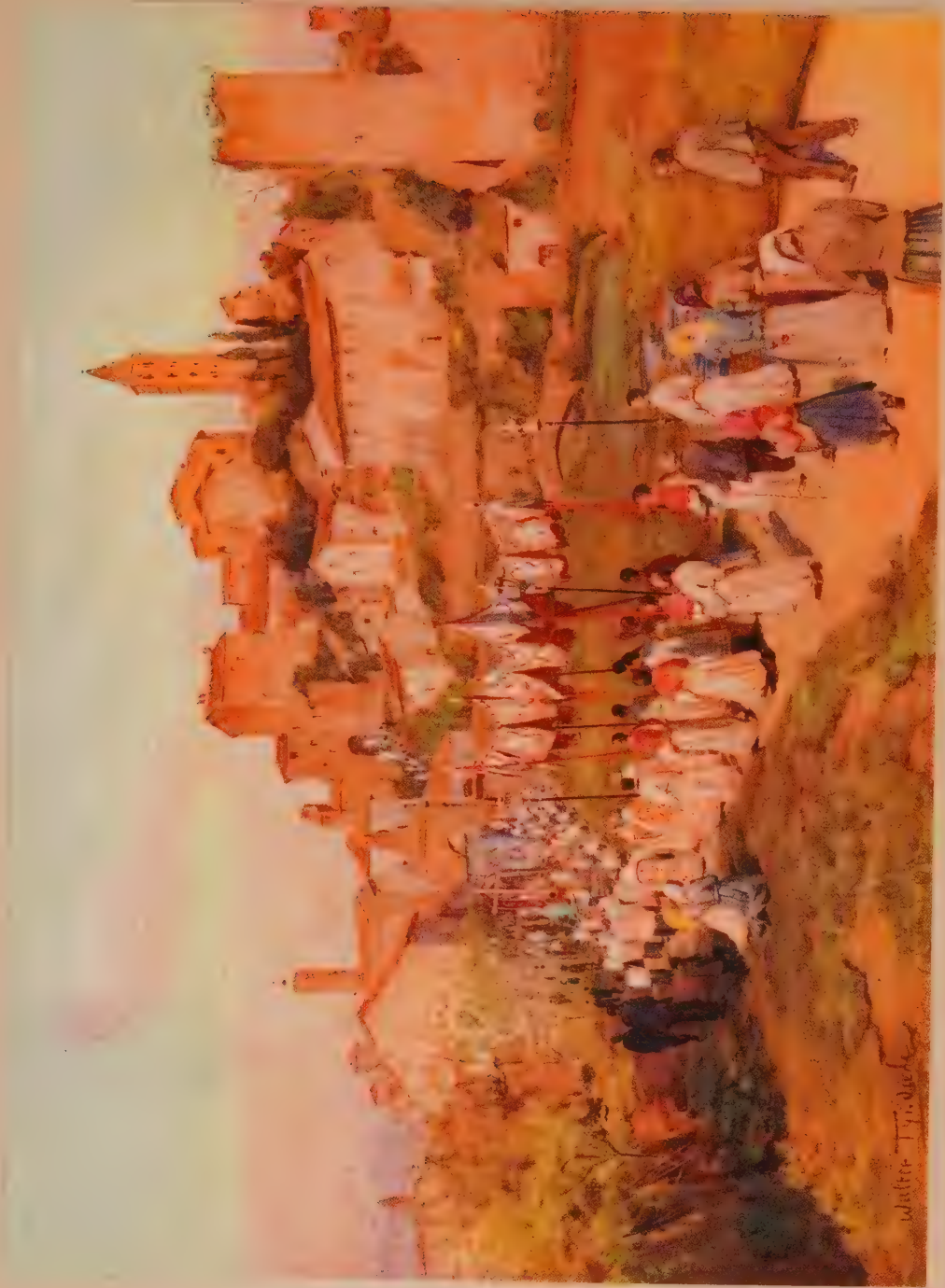
‘Il leggiadretto  
E sì divino  
Moscadelletto  
Di Montalcino.’

WE were within the walls of Montalcino before we came to a level bit of road. The houses echoed to the cracking of our driver's whip ; for an Italian driver must at all costs end his journey with a spurt. It was past lighting-up time, and anxiety to arrive at the Albergo del Giglio before being caught in a *contravvenzione* may also have hurried his movements. The inn is deserving of Mr. Hutton's praise and worthy of more than Herr Baedeker's 'tolerable.' Cold and hungry as we were, its shelter and good fare seemed very inadequately summed up by that otherwise excellent guide's dubious expression. Where the food is plentiful and well prepared, the beds clean, and host and hostess do their utmost to oblige their guests, we get as much as we can hope for in a remote mountain town. If we insist on the luxuries of a newly upholstered hotel, we must avoid the hill towns of Italy and remain where the well-to-do idle away a season. Our little party appreciated to the utmost the hospitality of the Giglio, the town did not disappoint us as a sketching-



CORPUS DOMINI AT VITERBO





Walter T. G. G. G.





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ground, and the walks in its neighbourhood were as good, if not better, than in any of the places we visited; but only during midsummer shall I ever be tempted to stay there again. A cold north wind howled through the streets during the whole of our stay, the vines were shrivelled before the grapes were gathered, and the few people we saw ran about their business wrapped in their cloaks and shawls. The dust, added to the cold, made painting out of doors an impossibility, so our time was mostly spent in sight-seeing or in excursions into the valley.

Montalcino formed a part of the Sienese Republic from the end of the thirteenth century till 1559, when she yielded to the combined forces of Cosimo I. and his Spanish auxiliaries, four years after the fall of Siena herself. The architecture, with the exception of a few recent buildings, is entirely Sienese, and the few paintings to see are also of that school; but they alone are not of sufficient importance to bring an art student here. The town itself is the chief attraction. Less mediæval-looking than San Gimignano, less lordly than Montepulciano, and less suggestive of a grim tragic fate than Volterra, it, nevertheless, holds its own as one of the most delightful hill towns in Tuscany. There is much in Montepulciano suggesting a bit of Florence, perched on a high hill; while Montalcino reminds one of a small Siena, but with a far grander outlook over its *contado*. The lanes, running steep from the main street to the lower outskirts, frame in vistas far beyond any Siena can show; and the houses, with pretty loggias and pergola-topped garden walls, make

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a better setting for the distant views than the more palatial structures at Montepulciano. There would have been plenty to sketch had this piercing wind only abated.

Before the town linked its fate with that of Siena, it formed a part of the abbey of S. Antimo, the church of which still exists, and is about six miles to the south. The abbey is said to have been founded by Charlemagne. Whether that be so or not, it is known that Louis the Pious largely endowed it, and that it was despoiled of a thousand farms in 938 by Lothair II., who gave them as a nuptial gift to his beautiful Adelaide. The Emperors Henry III. and Henry V., on the other hand, re-enriched it with large domains, and it received privileges and concessions from various Popes till the time of Boniface VIII. The religious community had then become so lax in its discipline that Boniface turned the monks out and replaced them by the Guglielmiti in the year 1298. The latter must in their turn have relaxed their rule, for Pius II. suppressed the monastery, and handed the buildings and what remained of the property over to the bishops of Montalcino, who still remain abbots of S. Antimo.

It is an easy half-day excursion to the church. We took the road to S. Fiora and the little towns which hang on the western slopes of Monte Amiata. Once under the lee of Montalcino's wind-swept ridge, we seemed again in full summer. We drove through a wooded country, holm-oaks and olives clothing the hills that shut us off from the distant landscape. On our way we overtook a strange little man carrying a

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builder's T. He held this up to us as a hermit might have lifted a cross to some passing pilgrims, and repeated in a high-pitched voice incomprehensible words; then stepping up to the side of the carriage, he bowed profoundly and squeaked out some more phrases. Our driver seemed to know him, so I asked to be enlightened. 'È il mio cognato, un poverello sordo-muto.' 'What can we do for your deaf and dumb brother-in-law?' was our next question. We were then told that if our lordships would not object to his taking a seat next to the driver both would be eternally grateful to us. His destination was Castelnuovo dell' Abate, a village about half a mile beyond the church of S. Antimo, and by giving him a lift we saved him a five-mile tramp. To show his gratitude he tried to act as cicerone, and screwing himself round on the box, he gesticulated and squeaked till a hint from his brother-in-law shut him up. It appeared that the half-witted little man had a wonderful knowledge of the history of the abbey and of the curious legends which usually cling to a place of such antiquity. I regret his lack of communicative power.

As we rounded the shoulder of a hill the grand old abbey church came into view. The queer little carpenter (for such was nominally his trade) could keep silence no longer, and, waving his T-square, we could distinguish amongst his squeaks the words 'Sant Antimo! Sant Antimo!' The church was locked, so we went in search of some one in the little farm-house, partly built with the material of the ruined cloisters. We found an old woman, who told us that the key was kept by



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the *parroco* of Castelnuovo dell' Abate, a village on the top of one of the hills which enclose the valley we were in. Off ran our queer little carpenter, scrambling through the fences, and returning with a bunch of keys within a quarter of an hour.

The church was erected during the eleventh century, and appears to have had few later additions than the two doorways, which are of the thirteenth. It is built of travertine, and of alabaster quarried in the neighbourhood. Except to ensure the safety of the structure, I saw no signs of restoration on the exterior. More had been found necessary inside, where some of the piers had been rebuilt. My first impression was that Bentley must have been inspired by this church when he designed the Westminster Cathedral, which, to my thinking, is one of the finest ecclesiastical structures of modern times. The proportions, in both cases, give a greater sense of space than in many churches of twice their dimensions. The plan is that of a Roman basilica adapted to Christian worship, the high altar being detached and placed on the chord of the apse. The floor of the nave rises at the second column from the altar steps, and the two aisles run the whole length of the nave till they meet the ambulatory, which projects beyond the apse. The vaulting of the aisles is less than half the height of the nave. The tryphorium—a great feature in this church—lights a passage connecting the cells, and the roof of these spring from the nave, below the clerestory windows. These cells are no doubt of a later period, and from the outside, where the aisles appear that much higher, they give the church a high-



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shouldered look which has not improved it. The campanile stands at the north-east end, and is attached to the aisle where that meets the ambulatory, but it rises clear from the nave.

The monastery having been suppressed in the middle of the fifteenth century, and the church only used on the feast of the saint, it has undergone none of the remodelling which has spoilt most of the church interiors of Italy. Any one interested in early Christian architecture will find at S. Antimo much to compensate him for going to such an inaccessible spot. The two churches at Toscanella, forty miles south of this, are more visited, owing to their being easily reached from Viterbo ; but, interesting as they are, they are not the work of one period, as is the case at S. Antimo.

Like all disused churches, be they ever so fine, they appeal more to the architectural sense than to the poetic or pictorial. Divested of the numberless mementoes (tawdry as they often are) of those who worship there, the once living fabric becomes a soulless corpse. Had I been able to spend some days there, I should have been more inclined to paint the farm-yard in the ruined cloisters. Here we have life, colour, and sunlight—all of which is lacking within the beautiful colonnades of the basilica.

The queer little carpenter remained with us till we left. He squeaked out much informative matter, could we only have understood him ; and the old woman who lived in the farm, thinking I must be deaf, yelled out a topsy-turvy interpretation, more entertaining than instructive. The drive back was pleasant as long as the

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sun lasted, but dire was the cold when we faced the winds on Montalcino's heights.

From the extreme point of the ridge, where the town stops short, as if a part had slipped into the valley, we could look eastward over San Quirico, see Pienza overtopping it, and beyond that Montepulciano hung in the air. But it was northward our eyes were attracted by a creamy radiation on the distant hills. I asked a peasant what *paese* was yonder. 'È Siena,' came his answer, begun in an alto and sinking to a bass before he had reached the last syllable. We seemed to have travelled so far during the past month that it was hard to realise that what we took for a village across the valley was Siena, our starting-point. With the help of a pocket-map we could trace the high-road from Buonconvento to Torrineri as a white line in the plain, and then lost and found in the undulations of the valley, to be picked up once more on the slopes of the Sienese hills. Siena, in a direct line, was but thirty miles from us. It would probably be less windy there, and if not, there were at any rate stoves which could be lighted in the S. Caterina pension. We decided to drive there as soon as arrangements could be made; and as is usual when about to take a course most pleasing to ourselves, we exaggerate the expense of the unpleasant alternative and minimise that of the one we like. Besides, is not a visit to Buonconvento a part of a liberal education? Mr. Maurice Hewlett is right—Tuscany should be travelled by road and not by railway.

Of things seen in Montalcino none impressed me more than the old banner brought here by the band of

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Sieneſe, headed by Mario Bandini. They had tramped from their native city after it had fallen into the hands of the Imperial troops and Cosimo's mercenaries, and with the people of Montalcino they represented for four years longer the laſt remnant of the old Republic of Siena. Some of the horrors of the great ſiege they had ſurvived were repeated here. France remained true to the Republic, but on the defeat of her arms at S. Quintano all hope for the beſieged Montalcineſi vaniſhed. The gallant little town had to make what terms it could with Gnevara, Spain's repreſentative ; and with the fall of Montalcino, on the 31ſt of July 1559, the Sieneſe Republic became a thing of the paſt.

The banner is preſerved in the Capella delle Carceri ; it bears the device of Siena, but painted over the lower part are the arms of Cosimo, the firſt Grand Duke of Tuscany.

We made an early ſtart on our drive to Siena, as we wiſhed to ſpend an hour or two at Buonconvento on the way. We could deſcend to the valley by a ſteeper road than the well-engineered one up from Torrinieri, thus ſhortening our route by four or five miles. We paſſed through a treeleſs diſtrict, ſhorn of the few crops the arid ſoil produces. Hill and dale were all of a yellowiſh colour, and looked as if covered with blankets in anticipation of the winter. On reaching the plain the homesteads were more frequent, and the country had a more proſperous look. We overtook ſeveral people and ſome bullock-carts on our road, which ſuggeſted ſomething unuſual. Our driver then told us that the annual *feſta* was on at Buonconvento, which



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doubtless accounted for his falling in so readily with our proposal to break our journey there; he even vouched to get us to Siena before sundown, were we to stay an hour or two longer.

We leave the *strada comunale* where it meets the *strada provinciale* some two or three miles south of Buonconvento. The latter road is as straight as a ruler until it reaches the undulating country nearing Siena. It enters the town at the Porta Romano and leaves it through the Siena gate. Till the railway diverted the traffic, the town was on the main communication between Siena and Rome, and placed as it is in the centre of a fertile plain, it is extraordinary that it should not have outgrown the limits of its walls. Seen from outside, it is still the mediæval town in which Henry of Luxemburg met his fate. From its position it is probably always a busy place compared with the hill towns, so difficult of access; and to-day its main street is thronged with country folk in holiday attire, bells are ringing, flags are flying, and signs of coming illuminations are seen on its house fronts.

We stabled our horses at the principal inn, and as an earnest of our midday meal a maid cut off a fowl's retreat and her mistress cut off its head. There was a private room where our 'Eccellencies' could be served, or we could have a table to ourselves in the public dining-room. On the walls of the former hung the usual eye-blistering coloured prints of saintly scenes and present royalties. In the latter these adornments were absent and flies were persistent; we, nevertheless, chose the latter.



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There was still an hour to spare before the meal, during which we walked round the walls, saw the cattle market, watched the peasant women bargaining for the pots and pans spread out on the grassy Piazza between the walls and the river. The houses in the main street had been mostly refronted during the more prosperous pre-railway times ; but, seen from the back, no plaster or paint disguise their senility. A small copy of the Mangia of Siena rises from the communal buildings, and a pepper-box campanile surmounts the Pieve. We deferred seeing the trecento pictures in the church, which an officious person wished to show us in spite of the celebration of High Mass ; they could wait till the organ played the worshippers back to the streets. The Pieve, notwithstanding its tawdry festival attire, presented a more moving picture, with its devout congregation and ceremonial service, than any we could have painted within the Romanesque colonnades at S. Antimo. People are more interesting than the churches they worship in, and houses are less than those whom they shelter ; when separated, a museumish depression takes the place of a lively interest.

The Italian Government is wisely protecting the works of art in most of the cities and villages, but this protection has been carried in some cases so far that the works and their purpose are hopelessly severed. The few pictures of interest in this church have probably been scheduled, and are occasionally examined to see that no harm may come to them : this is plausible enough. But let us consider what was done in the church of S. Francesco at Montefalco, a small Umbrian

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town not far from Foligno. That church is adorned with priceless frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli ; it also contains works of the greatest painters of Umbria, and to protect them from injury the church was laicised and made a national monument. The main object of the frescoes is to instruct the parishioners and to help their devotions ; now they are only seen by art students and a few tourists, except on rare occasions, one of which occurred last summer when the soldiers returned to their homes after the war in Tripoli. It was decided to give them a supper and what we know as a smoking concert ; the little town-hall was considered too small, so it was decided to use the church for this entertainment. As I know the church well, I was interested in reading an article in a leading Roman paper in which an eye-witness described the proceedings. There was an unlimited supply of wine, and though as a rule Italian peasants are abstemious, this entertainment ended in a drunken orgy. Now setting aside the irreverence, which might not appeal to those who laicised the church, just think of the danger to the art treasures left to the mercy of a drunken soldiery ! The article awakened a good deal of controversy. Some stated that the event had been grossly exaggerated, others condemned the irreverence, and some suggested that the parish priest might have been less of a danger to the works of art than the free-thinking town council in whose care they now were. Such a scandal may possibly not occur often ; but, even were it impossible, the church has lost much of its charm by being divorced from the people for whom it was built and so beautifully adorned.

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The art treasures in Buonconvento's little Pieve were well worth our second visit, if only to see the beautiful 'Madonna and Child,' by Matteo di Giovanni, over the high altar. Near it is a good example of Sano di Pietro's work, and there are also a few other Sieneſe paintings.

The Mangia-shaped tower of the Municipio has a number of armorial bearings of generations of podestàs. Large wall spaces are frequently relieved in Italy by these picturesque means. The *balzana* and the lion of the Commune of Siena decorate the expanse of brick-work beneath the machicolations of the gate leading to that city. But nothing could we find to recall that ill-fated Emperor, Henry of Luxemburg, who died here in 1313. He was the 'Alto Arrigo' whom Dante had exalted as the saviour of Italy, and through whose might the Ghibelline party hoped to stamp out the accursed Guelfs. Three years before his death he had set out for Italy at the head of his German troops, with the intention of making Rome the true capital of the Holy Roman Empire. The seat of the Papacy was then at Avignon, and the Pope, Clement v., had secretly favoured his election, after the murder of Albert of Hapsburg, in opposition to the claims Philip of France tried to establish. Clement also encouraged this descent into Italy, which at first promised to be little more than a walk-over. Counting on the Ghibelline party as a matter of course, he also hoped to win over the Guelfs owing to his support from the Pontiff, and as peace-maker between the two factions he looked forward to a united Italy as the jewel in his imperial



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crown. All went well for a short while, and on the feast of the Epiphany 1311 he was crowned with the iron crown of the Longobardic kings in the church of S. Ambrogio at Milan. Dante was exultant, and from his place of exile in the Casentino hills he wrote epistles to other cities, exhorting each one to welcome Italy's deliverer, and encouraging the Emperor to continue his march on Rome.

Florence stood between him and his ambitions; she would neither be ruled by Pope nor Emperor, and she spared neither money nor pains to alienate the other states from Henry's cause. The independent republics feared the loss of their liberties, and for once most of the cities of Tuscany joined hands with Florence to oppose the Emperor, whom they now considered the common enemy. Pisa held out for Henry, and helped his cause with men and money; and in spite of the Tuscan League, the opposition of the King of Naples and the withdrawal of the Pope's support, the Luxemburger entered the Eternal City, and was crowned Emperor in the Lateran Church in June 1312.

Urged by Dante's epistles 'to extirpate the root of all evil, the beast which drinketh from the Arno, polluting the waters with its jaws,' Henry VII. left Rome with the intention of subduing Florence. His forces were insufficient, harassed as they were by the troops sent by the other cities of the Tuscan League, and after two months his patience was exhausted. He raised the siege, and fought his way back to Pisa, where he was reinforced by the citizens. In the following year he attempted to return to Rome, and during a halt at Buonconvento



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the ill-fated monarch died. Rumour has it that his death was due to poison administered to him in the sacrament by a Dominican friar.

It is amusing to see how this prosperous little town struck Lady Blessington when she passed through it on her journey to Rome nearly a century ago. Writing from Radicofani, she says: 'On our route hither we passed through Buon Convento, as wretched a place as the deed committed in it; and which has bequeathed its name to posterity. I refer to the poisoning of the Emperor Henry VII. through the medium of the Sacrament, administered by a Dominican friar. The reflections to which a crime of so dark a dye gives rise are rendered still more gloomy by the view of the wild and sterile aspect of the scene where it occurred; and this savage aspect pervades nearly the whole route from Buon Convento to Radicofani, which looks as if created to be the abode of banditti.'

We will now continue our road, the Strada Romana, by which that 'crowned victim of his own fate' came to Buonconvento after Siena had closed her gates on him. It is hard to picture this smiling valley, laid waste by Henry's German soldiery, to repeople the prosperous country folk, now returning from the fair, by the starving wretches who fled from the foreign invader and his mercenaries. 'After Henry VII. was dead,' says Professor Villari, 'the Middle Ages had come to an end, and an entirely new epoch was now opening in the history of Florence and of Italy in general.'

We pass Seravalle, now a shapeless mass of masonry, but once a redoubtable outpost of Siena. We are

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continually made aware that we are now in the Val d'Arbia. We see the stream first at Buonconvento near its junction with the Ombrone, we cross it at the village of Ponte d'Arbia, and we never lose sight of it till Ponte Tressa is passed. On our right we then see the fateful Montaperto and the hills from which the river springs. We leave the plain, and from every hill summit the most welcome sight in Tuscany greets us. Siena is bathed in the light of the setting sun. There are a few more hills to climb, and Siena will open to us her heart more widely than her gate.

THE END

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